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**Chronology of DOS activities  
and the Venezuelan coup attempt (April 11-14 2002)  
Covering - (6/9/01-4/19/02)**

(U) The chronology below represents WHA's best efforts at reconstructing our activities regarding Venezuela and is based on DOS documents and e-mails retrieved and printed by individual WHA officer, as well as their recollections, here and in Caracas.

**6/9/01- (U) Remarks by the Vice President Richard Cheney at the Hispanic Leadership Forum in Orlando:**

Venezuela, of course, like a lot of countries has enormous problems. The huge gap between those few folks at the top who do very well and then the vast majority of people who live in pretty serious poverty. I don't know President Chávez personally. I'm concerned sometimes when I see his policies, what he does. He did get democratically elected by the people of Venezuela, and that counts for something.

(WHA/PDA)

8/28/01- (U) D meets with Venezuelan Foreign Minister Luis Alfonso Dávila.. (WHA/AND)

10/1/01- (U) E meets with Venezuelan Minister of Finance Nelson Merentes Díaz and Minister of Coordination and Plans Jorge Giordani. (WHA/AND)

10/10/01- (U) Then-AA/S Lino Gutierrez meets with Caracas Mayor Alfredo Peña. (WHA/AND)

10/23/01- (U) Then-AA/S Gutierrez meets with Francisco Arias Cárdenas, former Governor of Zulia state. (WHA/AND)

11/01- (U) On the periphery of the UNGA, P meets with all the Andean FMs, including Dávila of Venezuela. (WHA/AND)

11/1/01- (U) DAS J. Curtis Struble meets with CEVEU (Consejo de Empresarios Venezuela-Estados Unidos) delegation headed by FEDECAMARAS President Pedro Carmona. The CEVEU delegation explains that they are visiting the U.S. to seek Venezuela's inclusion in the Andean Trade Preferences Act. Struble states that the Administration neither advocates nor opposes Venezuela's inclusion, leaving the issue in the hands of Congress. He adds that Congressional sentiment seems strongly opposed to inclusion, given the GOV's criticism of the U.S. actions in Afghanistan and GOV opposition to the FTAA. (Note: This meeting preceded by two weeks FEDECAMARA's move into the

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Classified by WHA A/S Otto J. Reich

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camp of Chávez opponents. The conversation covers economic/trade rather than political issues.) (WHA/AND)

11/9/01- (U) U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela Donna Hrinak meets with Chávez confidant and Interior Minister Luis Miguelena. (Naranjo e-mail)

11/12/01- (U) Amb. Hrinak speaks before the Venezuelan National Assembly on the War on Terrorism. (Naranjo e-mail)

11/13/01 - (U) President Chávez, in a surprise move, legally enacts by decree 49 laws. The Chávez administration did not consult with the opposition or civil society in preparing most of these laws and in the few cases where it did consult, largely ignored the comments and criticisms that were provided. The most notable and subsequently criticized of these draft laws were the Land Reform and Hydrocarbon laws. (Naranjo)

11/15/01- (U) U.S. Ambassador to the OAS Roger Noriega responding to questions at the Heritage Foundation during a noontime presentation entitled "The Western Hemisphere: The OAS and U.S. Interests":

If hypothetical country X has an elected president who dances around the rule of law and is unpredictable, if a general comes and says he is going to put an end to that with a coup d'état, the OAS is not going to accept that. (WHA/PDA)

11/25/01- (U) Then-AA/S Gutierrez in Andrés Oppenheimer's article in the *Miami Herald* entitled "Venezuela's Chávez is facing coup rumors in Latin America":

"We would categorically reject any attempt to remove Chávez," said Lino Gutierrez, the top State Department official in charge of Latin American affairs. "We consider President Chávez to be the democratically elected leader of Venezuela." Gutierrez told me in a telephone interview from Washington, D.C.: "We stand by the Organization of

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American States Democratic Charter, which says very clearly that any government that achieves power via extra-constitutional means will not be welcome in the OAS."  
(WHA/PDA)

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12/10/02- FEDECAMARAS and Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela (CTV) organized a nation-wide work stoppage (creating a 90% shutdown), FEDECAMARAS President Pedro Carmona stressing non-violence. Meanwhile Chávez hosts a military air show above Caracas, rather than the traditional Maracay location, on the same day in honor of Venezuelan National Air Force Day and vows not to compromise on the 49 laws enacted under Chávez's decree powers. (Caracas 3606)

12/17/02- (U) Then-AA/S Gutierrez Addressing the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:

The Catholic Church has an important role to play in Venezuela. In the wake of the December 10 general work stoppage, it will be important for institutions such as the Church to remain engaged. The Church contributes by urging moderation and dialogue, and, as one of the most respected institutions in Venezuela, has considerable influence - the Church's moral voice resonates clearly in Venezuela. The human rights organizations of the Catholic Church have been important monitors of Venezuela's human rights situation. Overall, though human rights difficulties such as deplorable prison conditions and excessive use of force by security forces persist, Venezuela has a generally good human rights record. There are, however, growing concerns about threats against freedom of expression and of the press and undue pressure on organized labor. We appreciate

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the efforts of these Catholic human rights observers in closely monitoring developments. (WHA/PDA)

12/17/02- (U) Tens of thousands of Pro-Chávez people gather along Avenida Bolivar in Caracas on the anniversary of Simón Bolívar's death to watch Chávez reactivate the Bolivarian Revolutionary Movement-200 (MBR-200) and to swear in several thousand "Bolivarian Circles". Guillermo Garcia Ponce, the ideological force behind the circles tells Poloff that 14,000 "circle members" were in attendance. (Caracas 3712)

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Late December 2001/Early January 2002 - (U) Chávez instructs Movimiento Revolucionario de Venezuela (MVR - Chávez's political party) deputies to close dialogue tables that had been started to consider changes to some of the November 13 decree laws. Moderate MVR deputies who espoused dialogue are expelled from MVR subsequently. (Venezuelan Press)

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1/7/02- (U) Pro-Chávez mob gathers around the headquarters of El Nacional newspaper claiming the newspaper was manipulating information to the detriment of the Chávez government.

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Municipal Police, under the control of anti-Chávez Mayor of Caracas Alfredo Peña, break up the crowd with tear gas and water cannons. (Naranjo e-mail)

1/8/02- (U) Amb. Hrinak visits El Nacional headquarters and speaks in support of freedom of the press. (Naranjo e-mail)

1/8/02- (U) State Department Spokesman Richard Boucher during daily briefing:

We are concerned about the attempts by Chávez supporters to intimidate both opposition politicians and the press. Obviously, demonstrations are part of any normal democratic process, but we don't believe that intimidation is or should be. Democratic opposition and the free press are essential to the healthy functioning of the democratic process. We urge all Venezuelans to foster the democratic process through constructive, peaceful engagement and to refrain from statements and actions that create an environment conducive to intimidation. (WHA/PDA)

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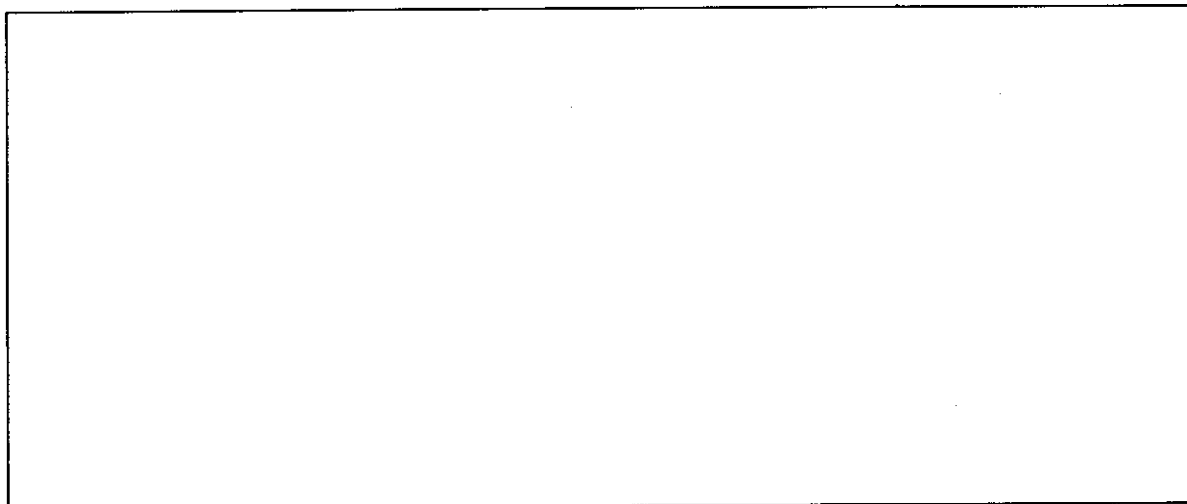
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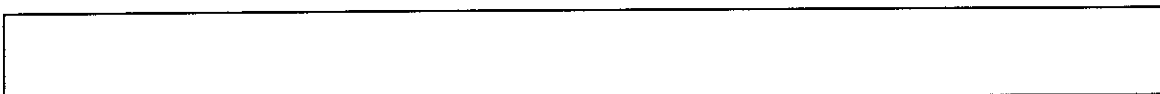
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1/16/02- (U) WHA A/S Otto J. Reich meets with Venezuelan Former Carabobo State Governor Henrique Salas Romer. (WHA/AND)

1/20 to 1/30/02- (U) Members of the Venezuelan NGO the People's Moment Foundation (Fundación Momento de la Gente) participated in a PAS-sponsored Voluntary Visitors program on Strengthening Democracy (Caracas 1107)

1/23/02- (U) Over 100,000 anti-Chávez protesters march in Caracas. (Venezuelan press)



1/28/02- (C) AmEmbassy Caracas reports that "Chávez Calls Catholic Church a 'Tumor'" (Caracas 0214)



1/24/02- (U) DOS Spokesman Boucher during daily briefing:

First of all, I think demonstrations, whether they're the opposition or pro-government, represent the kind of freedom of expression, and particularly in the political process, that we have always encouraged. We have been concerned about things in the other direction that tended to limit the political process or limit freedom of expression, such as with the newspapers.

So I think we would have to say that our belief in democracy makes us welcome demonstrations of whatever kind as expressions of - as a manifestation of freedom of

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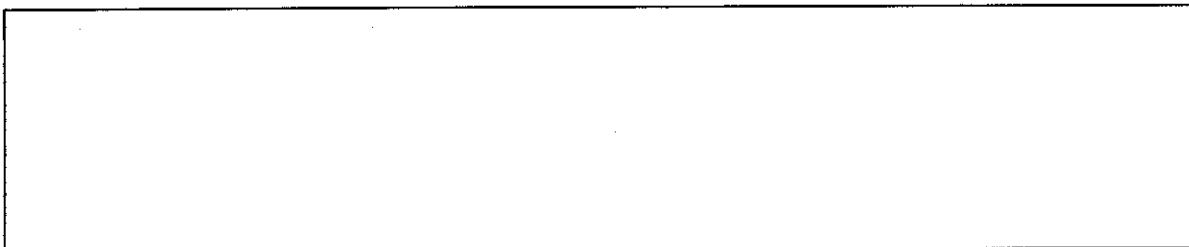
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expression. They are a democratic political process, we think, can best foster the kind of peaceful engagement of Venezuelan citizens and the political process that is necessary to resolve these kinds of situations. (WHA/PDA)

1/31/02- (U) A/S Reich meets with Venezuelan-American Chamber of Commerce (VENAMCHAM) President Andrés Mata. (WHA/AND)



B1

2/1/02-2/4/02- (U) Chávez launches a nationwide celebration honoring his failed coup attempt in 1992. (Caracas 0314)

2/5/02- (U) **Secretary Powell**, during testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee:

We have been concerned with some of the actions of Venezuelan President Chávez and his understanding of what a democratic system is all about. (WHA/PDA)

2/8/02- (U) **DOS Spokesman Boucher** during daily briefing:

We have had some concerns about political developments, about the pressure being placed on the opposition about some of the violence that has been directed at opposition members, particularly about the situation with regards to the press. So we would hope that things would proceed -- we certainly believe in the democratic institutions of Venezuela, and would hope that all sides would respect them.

**Question:** Do you believe that Mr. Chávez has stepped beyond the pale, as far as being a member of the democratic community of the Americas?

**Mr. Boucher:** I don't think that's quite a judgment that we can make. The view would be that he needs to respect the democratic institutions, as does everybody. (WHA/PDA)

2/11/02- (U) **DOS Spokesman Boucher** during daily briefing:

We have always also said here, repeatedly I think, that we share concerns about radicalization and polarization of the political process in Venezuela, that we supported the democratic process in Venezuela. It remains to be seen what direction that process might take in the coming year, but confrontation and rhetoric we think don't accomplish

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anything. It is important for all parties involved to engage in a dialogue and to respect the democratic institutions. That is what we've said here. (WHA/PDA)

2/12/02- (U) A/S Reich meets with Acción Democrática (AD) Secretary General Rafael Angel Marín Jaen. (WHA/AND)

2/14/02- (U) A/S Reich meets with CTV President Carlos Ortega, other CTV officials and AFL-CIO/Solidarity Center representatives. (WHA/AND)

2/14/02- (U) Chávez announces a bolivar (currency) float, blaming oil price drops and the "oligarchs" for the run on the bolivar. (Caracas 0380)

2/19/02- (U) DOS Spokesman Boucher during daily briefing:

**Question:** My question to you is would the United States support any movement from the military of Venezuela against a democratic and elected president?

**Mr. Boucher:** I think, as you remember from September 11th in Peru, the OAS has adopted a democracy charter, and we are all pledged to respect democracy in this hemisphere. That includes not only militaries, but also governments. And we have expressed a lot of concerns recently about some of the actions that President Chávez, or at least political supporters of President Chávez, have taken against journalists and democratic institutions.

So our view remains the same, whichever side is threatening democracy, and that is that democratic institutions in Venezuela and elsewhere need to be

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respected, and that any changes that occur need to be democratic and constitutional. (WHA/PDA)

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2/20/02- (U) Planned Anti-Chávez march (Bandera Roja) at Central University is disrupted by violence (including gunshots) attributable to Bolivarian Circles. (Venezuelan Press)

2/21/02- (U) PAO meets Mercedes de Freitas to discuss plans for programs in supporting democratic institutions. (AmEmbassy Caracas)

2/21/02- (U) A/S Reich speaks at Luncheon of Ambassadors of Latin America held by the Dominican Ambassador. Responding to a question put forth by Ambassador Marlene Fernandez of Bolivia,

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A/S Reich said that Secretary Powell is concerned about the "drifting" of Chávez's government and his international connections. A/S Reich also noted that Chávez's domestic actions also raised concerns. He noted that the USG has been gratified by the resilience of the Venezuelan institutions that have been challenged by Chávez, such as the press, labor, teachers, and parents. A/S Reich stressed that the U.S. is not planning on intervening in any way, but has every right to express concern about the state of democracy in a neighboring country.

A/S Reich comments that the U.S. has mixed feelings about seeing military officers challenge Chávez, but noted that Chávez often wore a uniform in public. A/S Reich urged the governments of the hemisphere to express their concerns about the situation in Venezuela, noting that they have influence. (WHA/PDA)

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2/25/02- (U) The Secretary's remarks at the Swearing-in of Charles Shapiro as U.S. Ambassador to the Bolivarian republic of Venezuela:

It is because the United States Government Attachés such importance to our bilateral relationship with Venezuela that Charles will do his utmost to address our differences with the Government of Venezuela. It is in the interests of both the United States and Venezuela to try to find firmer ground for our relationship.

I hope that the Government of Venezuela will demonstrate an equal willingness to work on our bilateral concerns.

Charles will take up his post in Caracas at a moment of great ferment within Venezuela. The United States recognizes Venezuela's need for bold and innovative efforts to revitalize its democratic institutions, to create new space for the exercise of fundamental liberties, and to address pressing social concerns.

Yet, growing polarization and political conflict can undercut the broader goals that are shared by all Venezuelans for a more prosperous and democratic Venezuela. Ultimately, this is a problem that only Venezuelans can resolve.

In the meantime, the United States, in concert with the Organization of American States and our hemispheric partners, will continue to offer our steadfast support to Venezuelan democracy and constitutional order.

The United States strongly encourages Venezuela to participate fully in a hemisphere of democracies and free markets. And, Charles, President Bush and I look to you to convey that message to the Venezuelan people and to their leaders. (WHA/PDA)

2/25/02- (U) Charles Shapiro at this swearing in as U.S. Ambassador to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela:

Venezuela is experiencing what the Secretary called "dramatic" times. The people of Venezuela are struggling with those very same concepts that Jefferson and the statesmen of his day wrestled with, and in fact they are the issues that our Congress and President struggle with every day. How to balance the public good against individual rights. How to make the economy grow. How to

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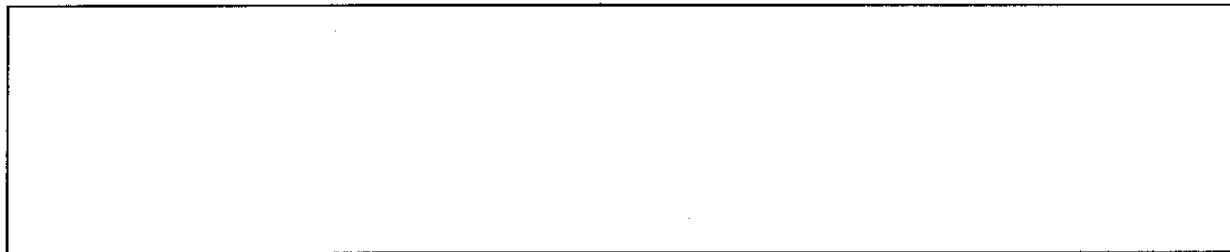
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help those who are most in need. These are not easy issues for any country in any period. They are the issues that Venezuelans must decide for themselves.

The United States and Venezuela are bound together in a myriad of personal, professional, cultural, and commercial ties. We have much in common: democracy, respect for human rights, the fight against narcotics trafficking, making the economies of both our countries grow, not just to help those with jobs but to create new employment and fight poverty. And we have our mutually beneficial energy relationship.

We have a strong base of common values to build upon - a base that ensures that we will weather whatever differences might occur. (WHA/PDA)



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2/26/02- (U) DOS Spokesman Boucher during daily briefing:

**Question:** Another Venezuelan military officer has come out against President Chávez. Are you saying the same thing as last week, or are you escalating?

**MR. BOUCHER:** I'll say the same thing as last week. I'll say it again and again. We believe that all parties should respect democratic institutions. Those who may want change, political change, need to pursue it democratically and constitutionally. That's part of the democracies charter that we have signed and joined in with others in the hemisphere. And, frankly, that applies to whatever direction the attacks on democracy might be coming from. And we have, I think, made no secret about our concerns about some of the things that President Chávez has done, against the opposition, against the free press, which we also consider to be detrimental to democracy. But the important thing is that democracy and the democratic institutions be respected. (WHA/PDA)

2/27/02- (U) CTV and FEDECAMARAS march to commemorate riots in 1989. A general strike is predicted for March 2002. (Caracas 0461)

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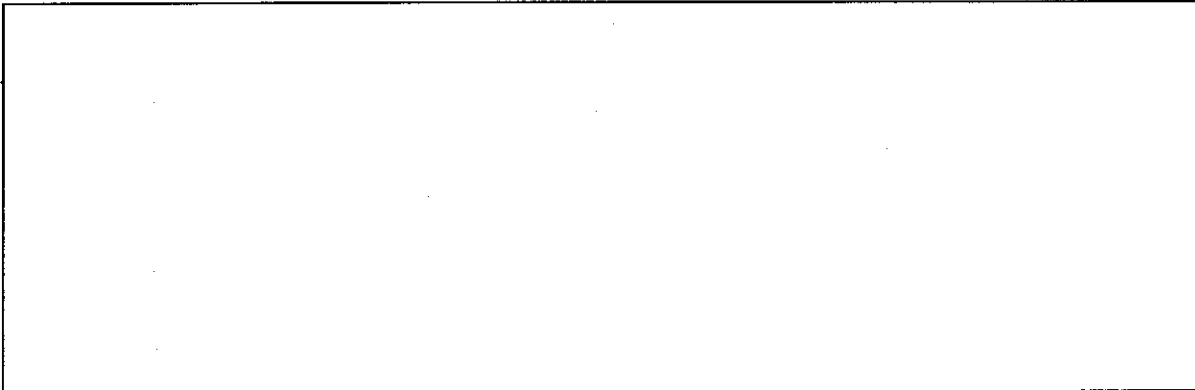
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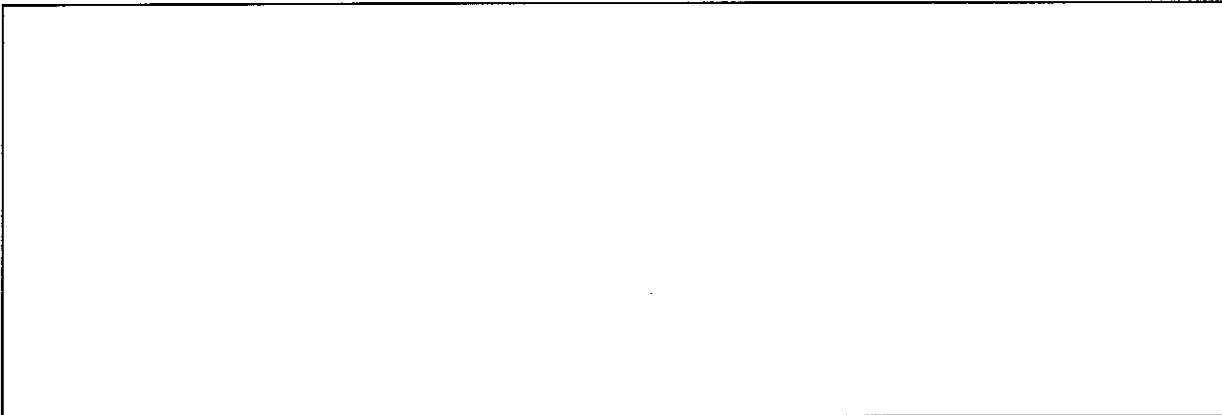
2/28/02- (U) State Department Deputy Spokesman Philip Reeker at the Foreign Press Center on question about policy toward Venezuela under a new ambassador:

I think, you know, we have talked about Venezuela certainly many times from here -- when I have come over here, and Ambassador Boucher has, the Secretary has. Some of the concerns we've had about the status of Venezuela's democracy, about the need to pay attention to constitutional processes, how important that is, and to respect democratic institutions in Venezuela, including the independent media, including all those other parts of a civil society, and to do it peacefully, and to recognize the other political elements and to have dialogue on political differences. And so that's what, I think, we'll continue to call upon, and to promote in Venezuela. We have a long, rich history with Venezuela, and we want to see Venezuela to continue to be a member in good standing of the community of democratic nations in this hemisphere. And the OAS has outlined that so well in the Democracy Charter that was agreed to and signed in Lima. (WHA/PDA)



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3/9/02- 2130- (U) Amb. Charles Shapiro arrives at post.  
(AmEmbassy Caracas)



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3/11/02- 1200- (U) At lunch with VENAMCHAM Investment Committee, Amb. Shapiro and DCM Cook are asked what the U.S. response would be to various hypothetical situations. Amb. Shapiro responds that the U.S. will not support a coup d'etat or any other extra-constitutional change of government. (AmEmbassy Caracas)

3/12/02- 1300- (C) Amb. Shapiro meets with Papal Nuncio Andre Dupuy. This conversation (what conversation?) is repeated with the Ambassador's of the UK (3/12), Chile (3/13), and Mexico (3/13). (AmEmbassy Caracas)

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3/14/02- 1530- (C) Amb. Shapiro presents a copy of his credentials to Foreign Minister Dávila. Amb. Shapiro expresses concern for the extreme polarization in Venezuela and states

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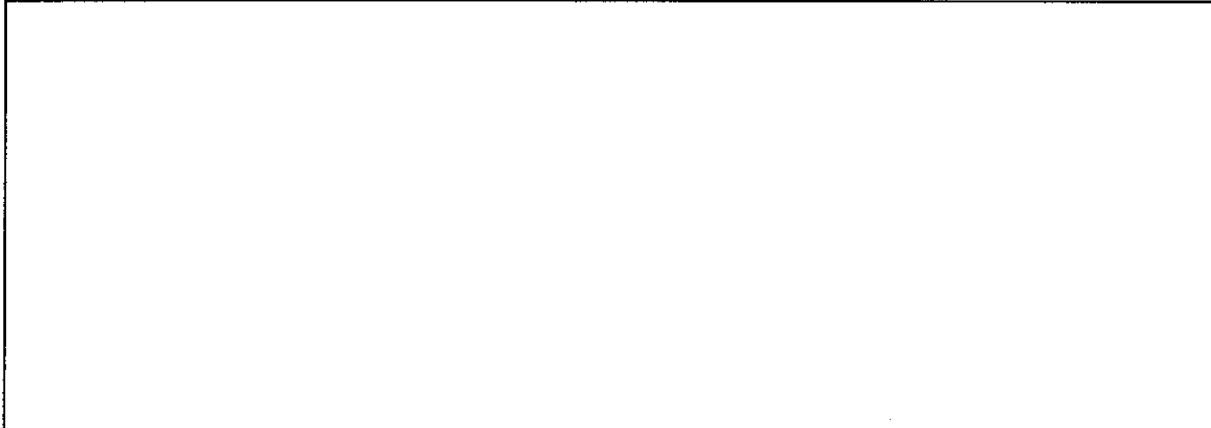
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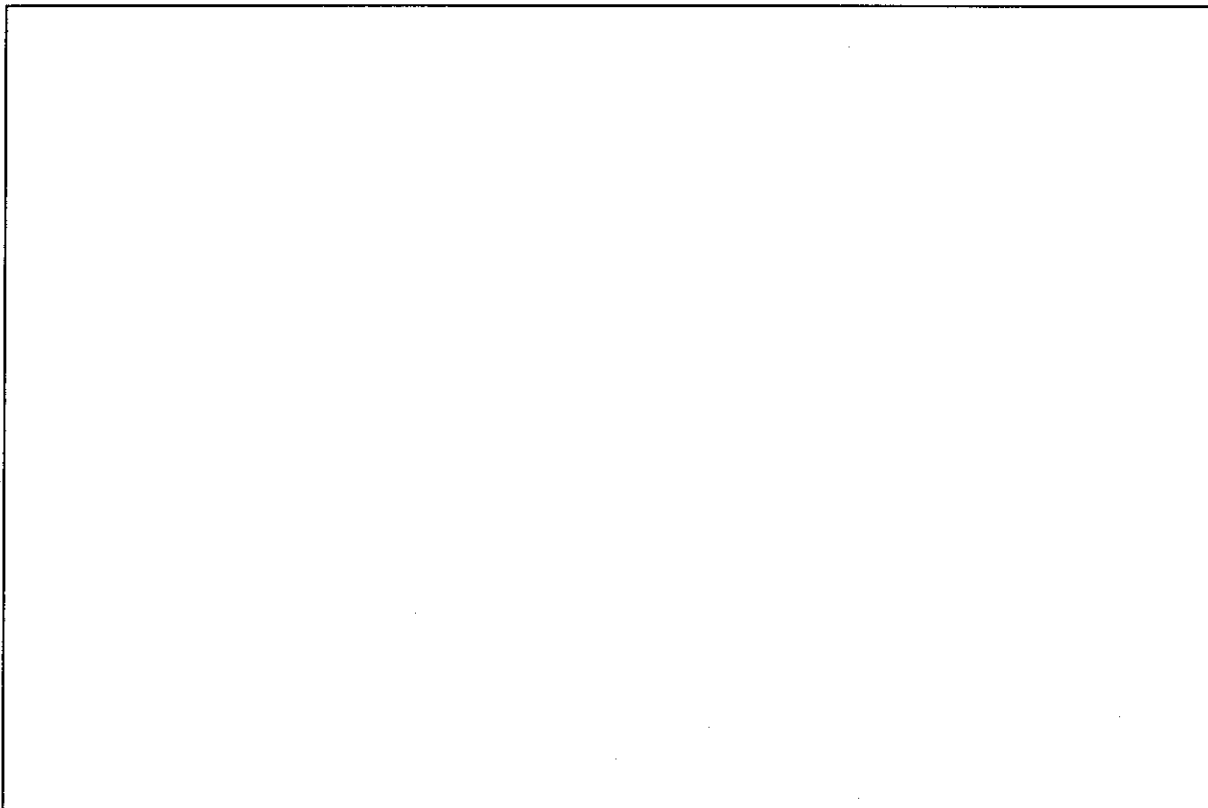
U.S. opposition to any unconstitutional change of government as well as opposition to intimidation by the government of its opponents. (AmEmbassy Caracas)

3/14/02- (U) DAS Struble meets with an IRI Delegation of civil society representatives that includes political, union, business, and social activists. (WHA/AND)



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3/19/02- (U) A/S Reich meets with Luis Giusti, former President of PDVSA. A/S Reich categorically states that under no circumstances will the U.S. accept or condone any unconstitutional, undemocratic change in Venezuela. (WHA/AND)



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3/21/02- 1500- (U) During an FCS-arranged meeting of the Trade working group in the Embassy, Venezuelan business leaders, including [redacted] meet with Amb. Shapiro and Econoffs, complaining that Chávez has not responded to the December 10 2001 work stoppage, the January 23 marches, or other calls to "rectify" the controversial decree laws. As in past meetings, the leaders stress the importance of U.S. support if a change of government were to occur. Ambassador Shapiro responds that speaking as the President's representative he could state categorically that the U.S. would oppose any unconstitutional change in government in Venezuela. (Caracas 0823)

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3/25/02- (U) A/S Reich meets with Caracas Mayor Alfredo Peña.  
(WHA/AND)

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3/28/02- 1030- (U) A/S Reich, Amb. Shapiro, and WHA/AND Director Tom Shannon meet with a delegation of six MAS-Más politicians (the pro-Chávez wing of the Movement toward Socialism (MAS) party,) including National Assembly VP Rafael Simón Jimenez. A/S Reich stresses U.S> opposition to an extra-constitutional change in government, while laying out clearly U.S. concerns with the policies of the Chávez government. (WHA/AND)

3/28/02- (U) EB/IEC Director Matthew McMannus meets with Venezuelan National Assembly Energy Committee President Luis Salas. (Naranjo e-mail)

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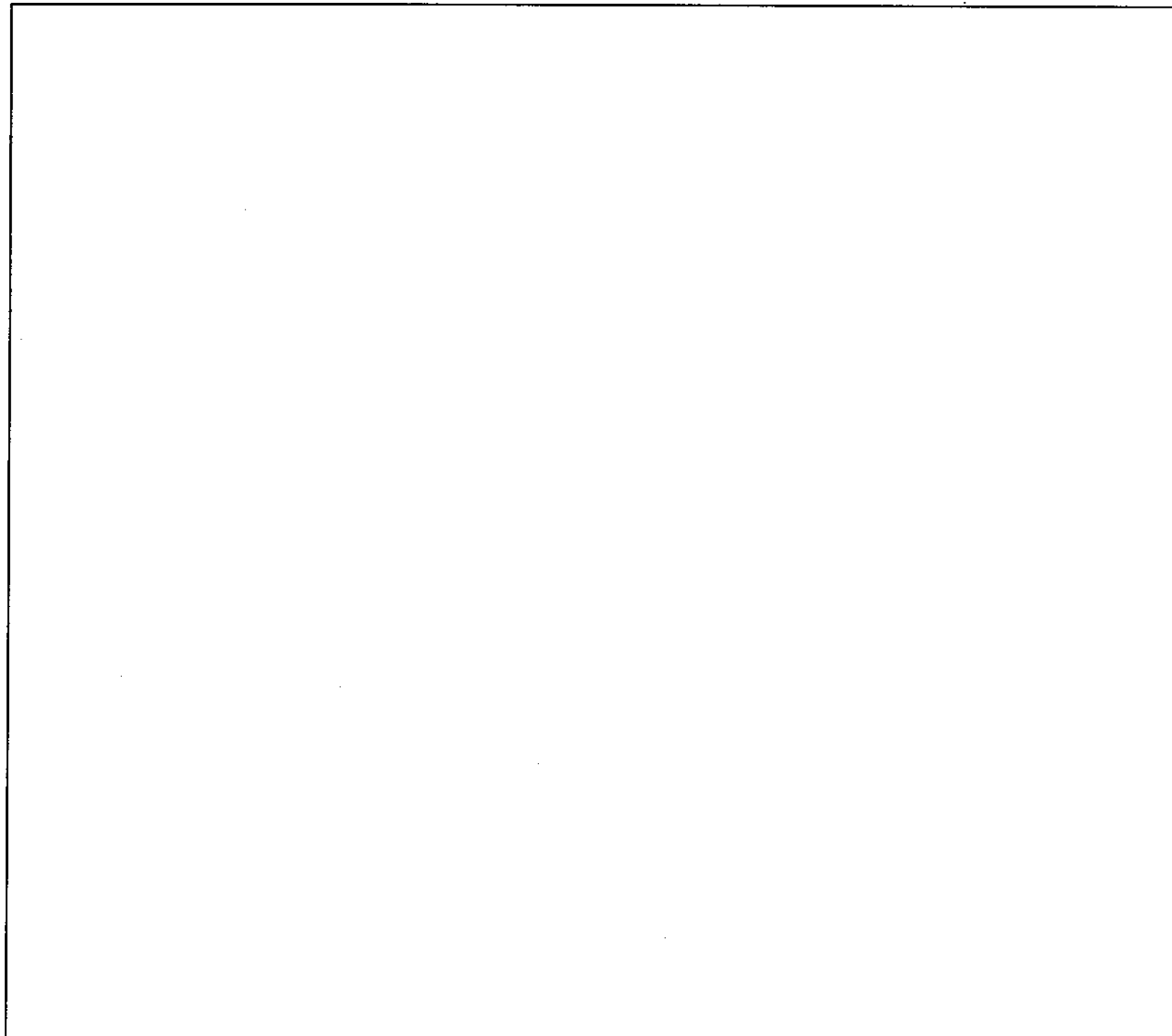
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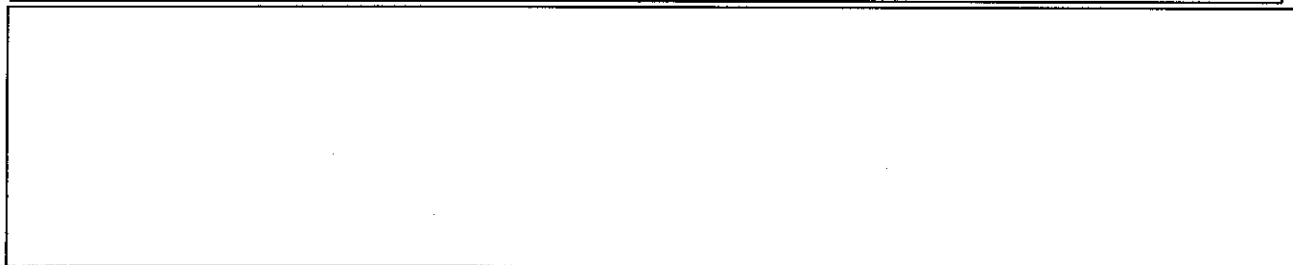
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4/4/02- (U) PDVSA workers take to the streets and begin a work shut down in several operations around Venezuela in protest against the Chávez-appointed PDVSA board. (Caracas 0884)

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4/7/02- (U) Chávez announces the firing of seven PDVSA managers, the forced retirement of 12 and the removal of an additional five from their positions. There are calls for an "indefinite" PDVSA strike. CTV, with the support of the business association FEDECAMARAS, calls for a general strike on April 9 and Chávez interrupts the transmission to announce a 20% increase in the minimum wage as of May 1. (Caracas 0927)

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4/8/02- 0945- (U) Amb. Shapiro convokes a meeting of all reporting officers to discuss what steps can be taken to avoid the impending crisis and instructs all present to tell there contacts that the U.S. is opposed to an extra-constitutional change in government. (AmEmbassy Caracas)

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4/8/02- 1730- (U) Beginning now and lasting until 1600 on 4/9, the GOV runs over 30 separate "cadenas" (state broadcasts which all radio and TV stations are obliged to air), occupying some sixty percent of broadcast time. The TV stations react just after mid-day 4/9, splitting the screen between their regular news reports and a cadena by the Labor Minister. The split-screen action against the cadenas is unprecedented in Venezuelan history. By 1600 4/9, the government stops airing cadenas. The GOV's Council of Ministers reportedly meets at Miraflores the night of 4/9 and, according to one TV source, agrees after debate to take over the commercial TV signals. (Note: The take-over never occurs as the National Guard refuses to enter the stations- see notes below) (Caracas 1209)

4/9/02- (U) EconOffs observe the work stoppage and speak with both CTV strikers and pro-government marchers. (Caracas 0948)

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4/11/02- (U) State Department posts Public Announcement about Venezuela on its internet website.

U.S. citizens should defer travel to Venezuela until further notice. There has been violence in Caracas between anti-government and pro-government protesters, as well as large demonstrations and disruptions of public services throughout the country. Although the international airport is still functioning, roads giving access to the airport may be blocked or closed, and the availability of airport services is subject to rapid change. The Department reminds U.S. citizens that they should carefully monitor news broadcasts for further developments. (DOS website)

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4/11/02- (U) EconOfs observe opposition and pro-Chávez marches from Miraflores, PDVSA and El Silencio. (Caracas 0973, 0974 and 0980)

4/11/02- 1300- (C) A very large anti-government crowd has massed in Altamira.

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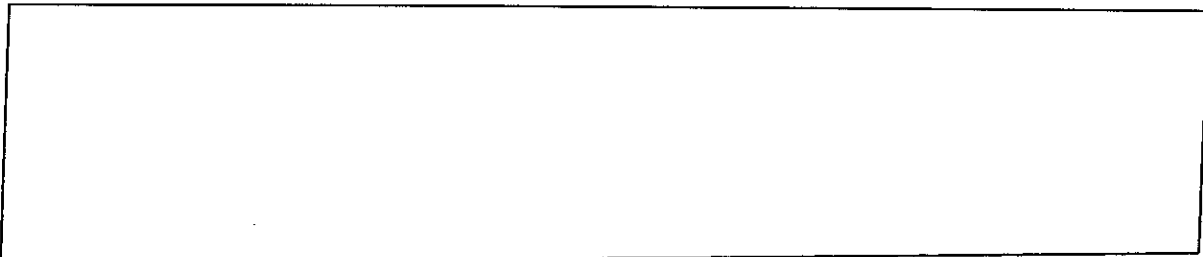
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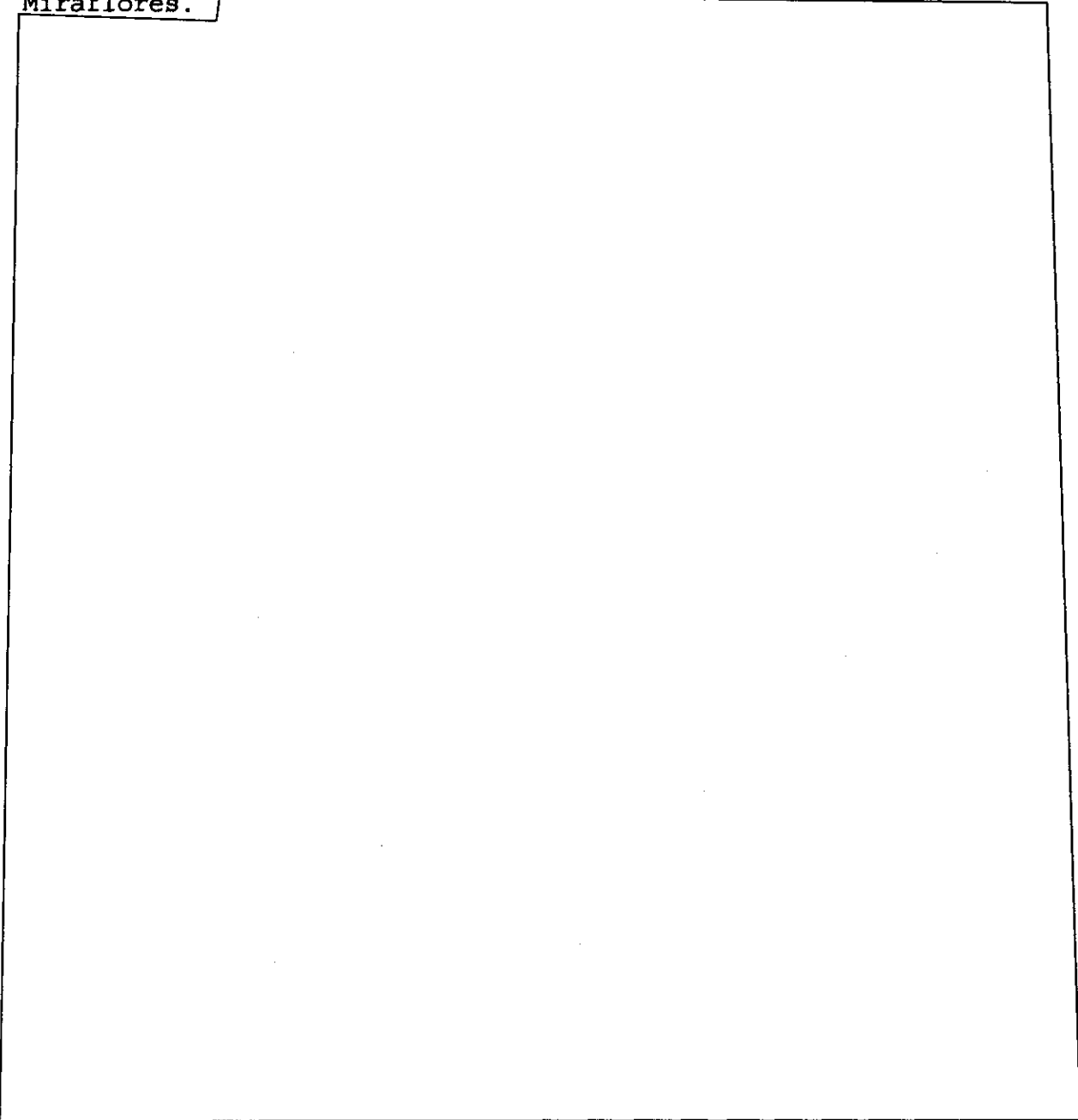
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Metro police report 5 dead and 40 wounded near  
Miraflores.



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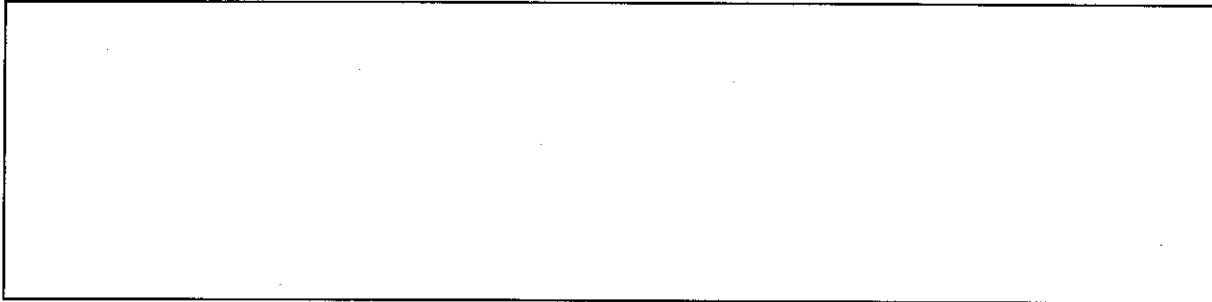
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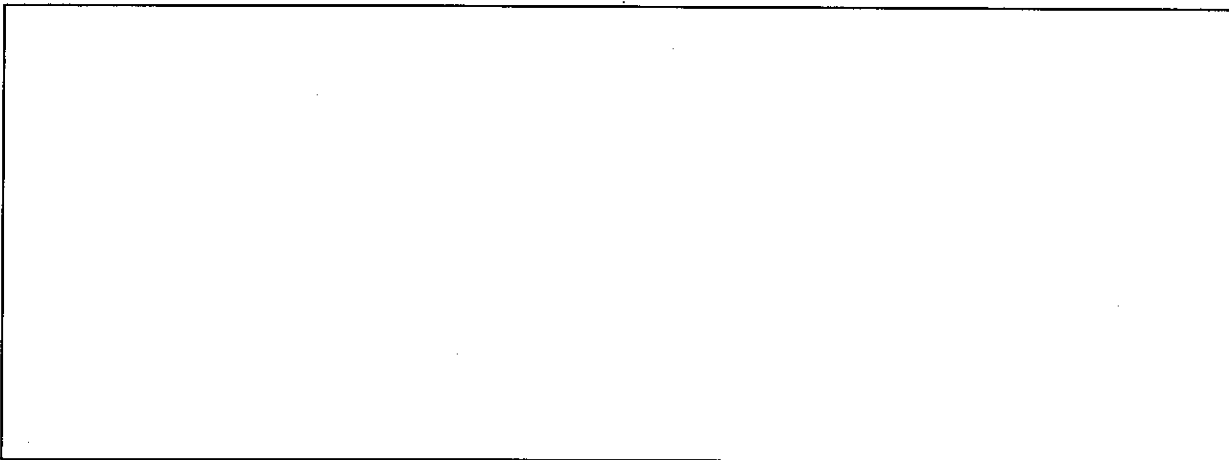
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4/11/02- 2137- (U) The General corps of the Army announces their rebellion against the actions of Chávez against civilians during the protests. (Venezuelan Press)



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4/12/02 - 0030-0045 (C) DAS Struble and Venezuela Desk Officer Brian Naranjo separately provided updates of developments in Venezuela. (Officers' recollections)

4/12/02- 0129- (U) Commander of the Army Efraín Vásquez announced that two military officers begin to negotiate with Chávez on his departure. (Venezuelan Press)

4/12/02- 0320- (U) Gen. Rincón announces that he has requested Chávez's resignation and Chávez has given it. (Venezuelan Press)



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4/12/02- 0400- (U) Chávez is arrested and taken to Fuerte Tiuna where he is to face charges for the 4/11 deaths. (Venezuelan Press)



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4/12/02- 0451- (U) Pedro Carmona announces that he will assume the Presidency of Venezuela and will soon announce several executive measures. (*Venezuelan Press*)

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[REDACTED]

4/12/02- 0900- (U) SYG Gaviria meets with Permanent Council Chair, Vice Chair Roger Noriega (U.S. PermRep), and Assistant SYG Einaudi to discuss OAS response/special Permanent Council meeting. (USOAS)

[REDACTED]

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4/12/02- (S) Amb. Shapiro holds meeting with AmEmbassy Caracas Country Team.

[REDACTED]

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4/12/02- (U) **Statement by DOS Deputy Spokesman Reeker:**

In recent days, we expressed our hopes that all parties in Venezuela, but especially the Chávez administration, would act with restraint and show full respect for the peaceful expression of political opinion. We are saddened at the loss of life. We wish to express our solidarity with the Venezuelan people and look forward to working with all democratic forces in Venezuela to ensure the full exercise of democratic rights. The Venezuelan military commendably refused to fire on peaceful

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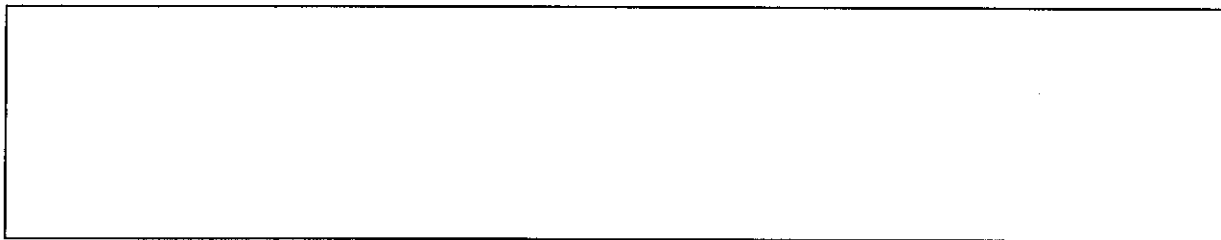
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demonstrators, and the media valiantly kept the Venezuelan public informed.

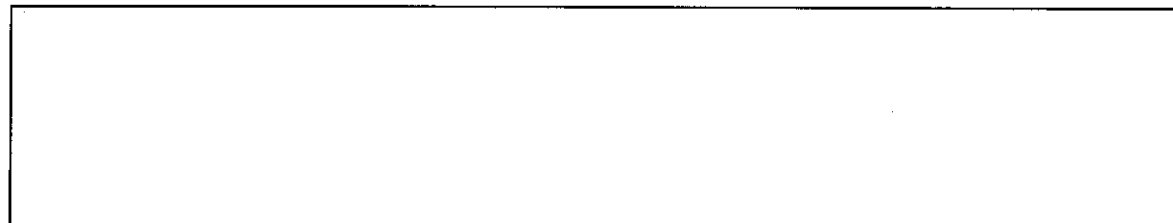
Yesterday's events in Venezuela resulted in a transitional government until new elections can be held. Though details are still unclear, undemocratic actions committed or encouraged by the Chávez administration provoked yesterday's crisis in Venezuela. According to the best information available, at this time: Yesterday, hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans gathered peacefully to seek redress of their grievances. The Chávez Government attempted to suppress peaceful demonstrations. Chávez supporters, on orders, fired on unarmed, peaceful protestors, resulting in more than 100 wounded or killed. Venezuelan military and police refused orders to fire on peaceful demonstrators and refused to support the government's role in such human rights violations. The government prevented five independent television stations from reporting on events. The results of these provocations are: Chávez resigned the presidency. Before resigning, he dismissed the Vice President and the Cabinet. A transition civilian government has promised early elections.

We have every expectation that this situation of democracy will be resolved peacefully and democratically by the Venezuelan people in accord with the principles of the Inter-American Democratic Charter. The essential elements of democracy, which have been weakened in recent months, must be restored fully. We will be consulting with our hemispheric partners, within the framework of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, to assist Venezuela. (WHA/PDA)



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4/12/02- 1404- (U) Chávez's Attorney General announces that Chávez has not resigned. (Venezuelan Press)



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4/12/02- (U) US-Spain Joint Statement on the Situation in Venezuela:

The Governments of the United States of America and Spain, in the framework of their reinforced political dialogue, are following the events as they develop in Venezuela with great interest and concern and in continual contact.

In this regard, the two Governments:

- state their rejection of the acts of violence that have caused a number of fatalities and transmit their condolences to the families,
- call for a cessation of the violence and the recovery of public calm,
- express their desire that the exceptional situation Venezuela is experiencing lead in the shortest possible time to full democratic normalization and work to obtain a national consensus and the guarantee of fundamental rights and freedoms,
- urge the Organization of American States to assist Venezuela in consolidating its democratic institutions.

While expressing their full support and solidarity with the people of Venezuela, the Governments of the United States of America and Spain, state their conviction that only the consolidation of a stable democratic framework can offer a future of freedom and progress to the Venezuelan people."

(WHA/PDA)

4/12/02- 1530- (U) A/S Reich and Amb. Noriega meet with all the WHA ambassadors regarding the situation in Venezuela. A/S Reich briefed the Ambassadors on what DOS knew about what was happening in Venezuela. Stated the central concern that nothing break the constitutional chain. Re-stated the need to mobilize the OAS to invoke the Democratic Charter. A/S Reich emphasized that the situation was in flux, and these were initial USG views. The ambassadors then discussed what their governments had heard about events in Venezuela and their analyses of the situation; several hypothetical outcomes were discussed.  
(WHA/AND, USOAS and O'Reilly e-mail)

4/12/02- 1600- (U) The U.S. receives Rio Group Summit Declaration, condemning "interruption of constitutional order... generated by a process of growing polarization" and invoking Article 20 of Democratic Charter. (USOAS)

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4/12/02- 1739- (U) Carmona announces the transitional government, calls for elections in one year, and issues several decrees changing the structure of the GOV, including the dissolution of the National Assembly and the Supreme Court. (Venezuelan Press)

B1

4/12/02- 1800- (U) SYG Gaviria meets with OAS ambassadors on next steps and a proposed mission to Venezuela. Amb. Noriega: (1) urges the need to help Venezuela respect liberties and constitutional framework; (2) says essential elements in Democratic Charter are a roadmap back to democracy and that each democratic element has been assaulted over past few months; (3) stresses need to know whether there is a legally constituted authority in Venezuela now; (4) emphasizes the need for the facts and explanations from the "provisional government;" (5) says SYG Gaviria should visit Venezuela and report back to the

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Permanent Council; and (6) suggests that the SYG could convene foreign ministers after the facts are known. (USOAS)

B1

4/12/02- evening- (SBU) A/S Reich has dinner with former Venezuelan Ambassador to the U.S. Arcaya. Reich tells Arcaya that Carmona's dissolution of the legislature and Supreme Court and derogation of 1999 constitution are unacceptable; Venezuela will be isolated if it does not "follow the constitutional thread." (Struble recollection; Arcaya published interview)

4/12/02 - 2309 (C) Naranjo convenes conference call with DCM Cook, Shannon, DAS Struble, Farrar, and CA/OCS duty. (Naranjo recollection, Ops Center log)

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4/13/02 - 0937 (C) DAS Struble convenes a conference call in which A/S Reich, Amb. Maisto, Amb. Shapiro, DCM Cook, Shannon, L/WHA Eric Pelofsky, and Naranjo participated. (Naranjo recollection, Ops Center log)

4/13/02- 1100- (U) The U.S. participates in Informal Private session of OAS Permanent Council (not open to press). (USOAS)

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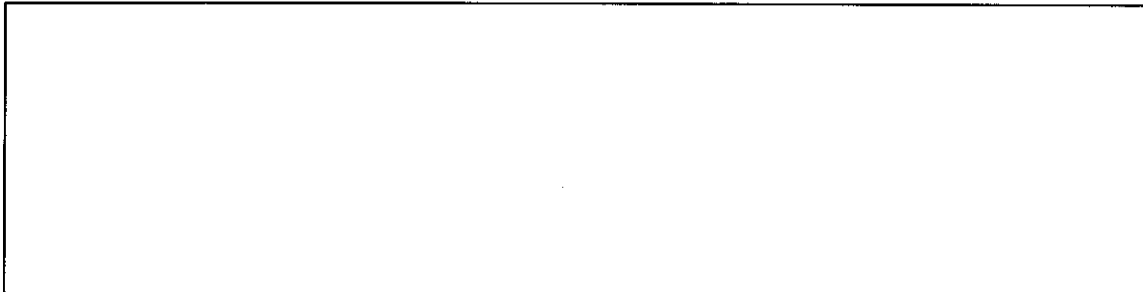
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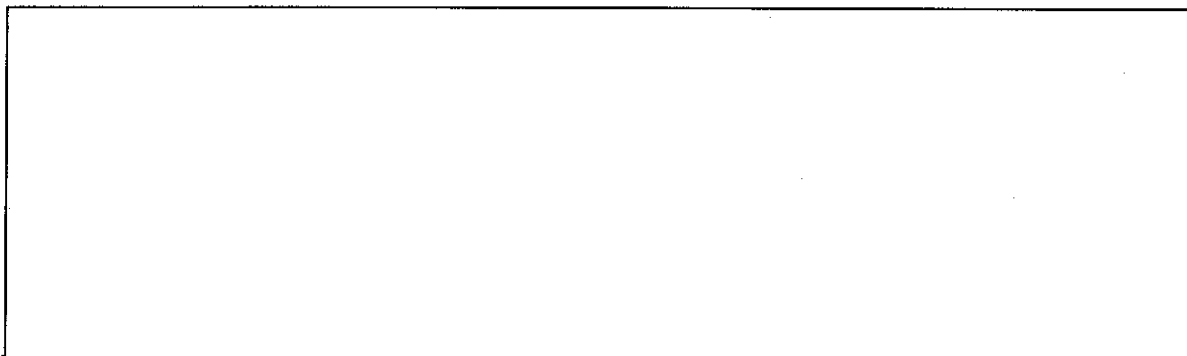
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4/13/02- Approximately 1300- (U) In U.S. statement, Amb. Noriega: (1) asserts that the OAS should have acted to defend democracy before this crisis became disastrous; (2) says OAS should be "rigorous with those who call themselves the 'provisional government'" and demand they respect the essential elements of the Democratic Charter, and prove they are legitimate; (3) cautions to wait for the SYG's report on the facts; (4) supports the invocation of Article 20 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter with some reference to the "alteration of the constitutional order." (USOAS)



B1

4/13/02- Approximately 1330- (SBU) DCM phones DAS Struble to report that pro-Chávez demonstrators are rioting and looting in Central Caracas amid reports of military unrest. DAS Struble says he will wait for confirmation, but intends to stand up a Task Force if reports true. (Struble recollection)

4/13/02- 1334- (U) In Maracay, Gen. Baudel rises up in support of Chávez with a brigade of paratroopers. (Venezuelan Press)

4/13/02- 1400- (U) [redacted] calls Friedman in USOAS to state that the 4/12 1700 message had been relayed to [redacted] and was being acted upon. (USOAS)

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4/13/02- 1441- (U) Ops Center convenes conference call at request of Amb. Shapiro that includes A/S Reich, DAS Struble, Naranjo, DCM Cook, Farrar and Mr. Purvis-Smith (CMS). Amb. Shapiro confirms reports of looting and serious discontent in military over Chávez removal & actions of Carmona government.

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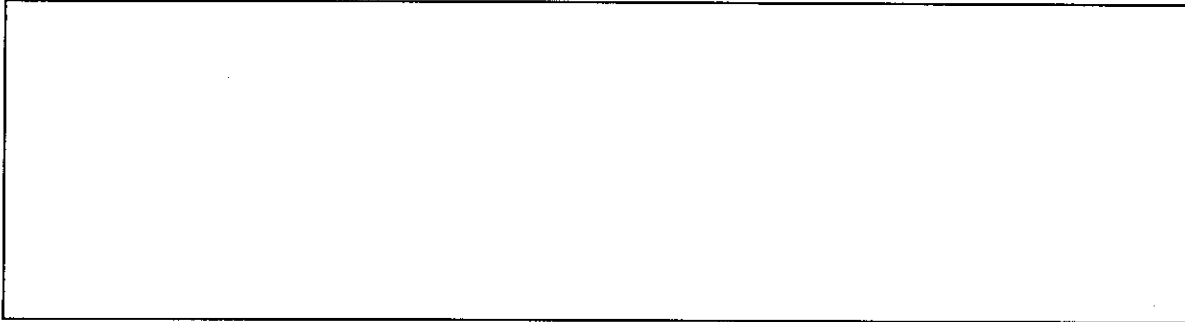
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DAS Struble requests formation of task force. (Ops log; Struble recollection)

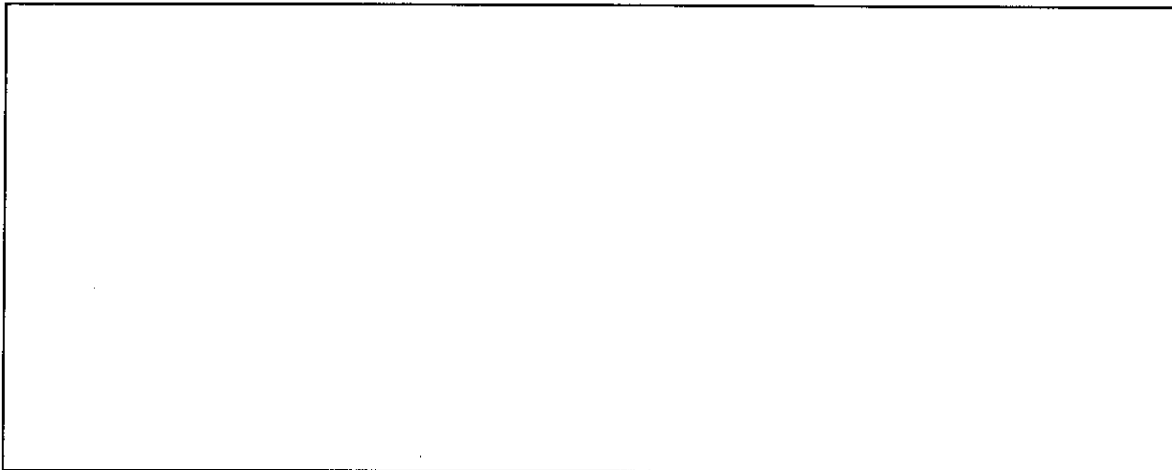
04/13/02- 1516- (S) Naranjo called A/S Reich. (Naranjo recollection, Ops Center Log)

4/13/02- 1519- (U) At the direction of the ExecSec, the Venezuela Task Force convened in TF3 under direction of DAS Struble. (Ops Log)



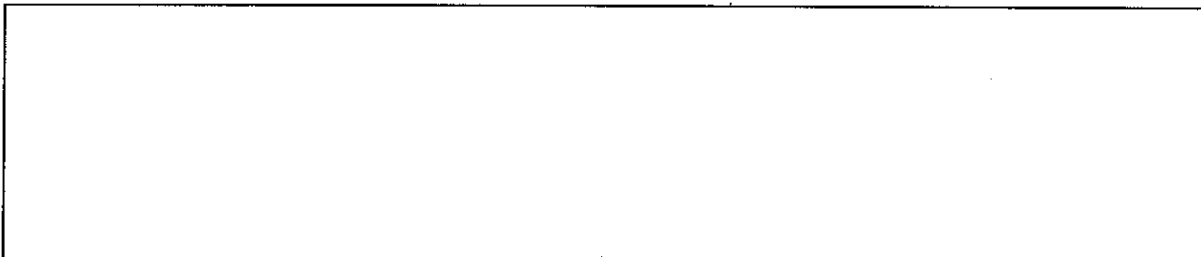
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~~4/13/02- 1600- (S/NF) State Task Force Venezuela begins operations. (TFVE03 Log)~~



B1

4/13/02- 1730- (S/NF) Carmona announces the National Assembly will be reconvened and that Chávez will go into exile. (TFVE03 Log)



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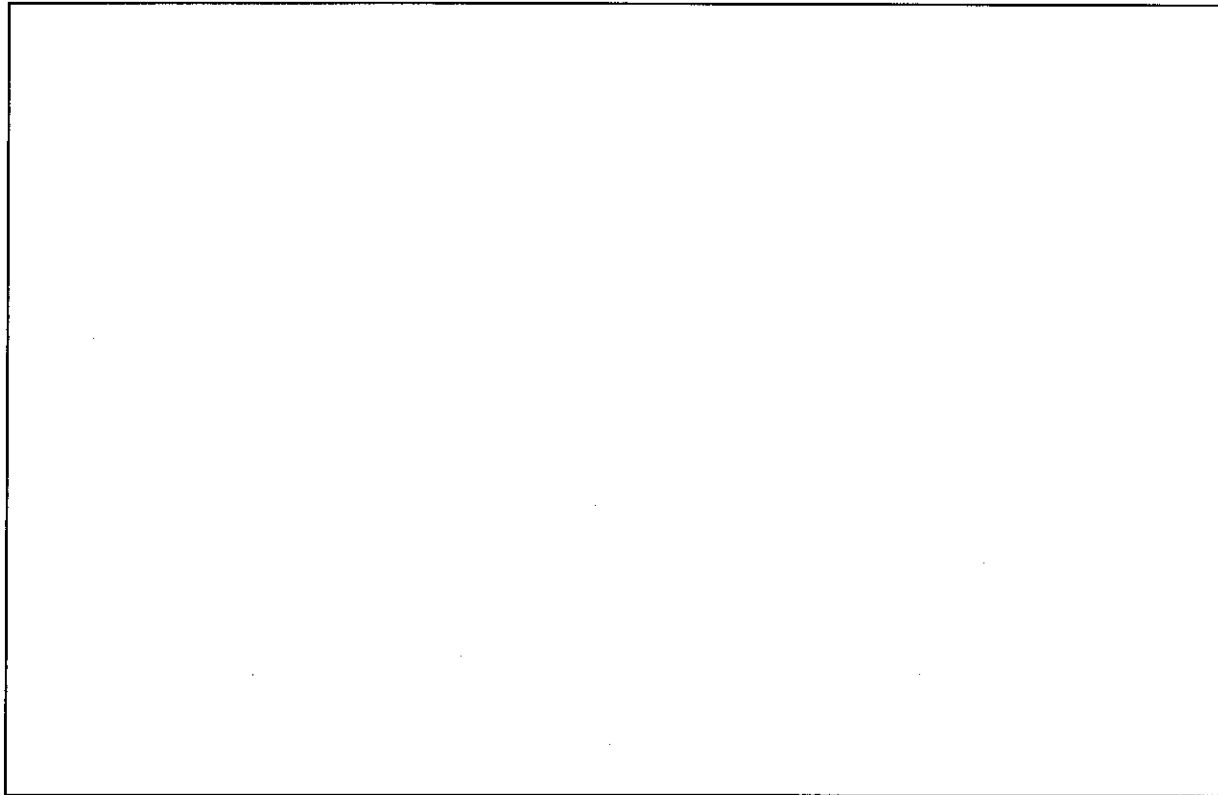
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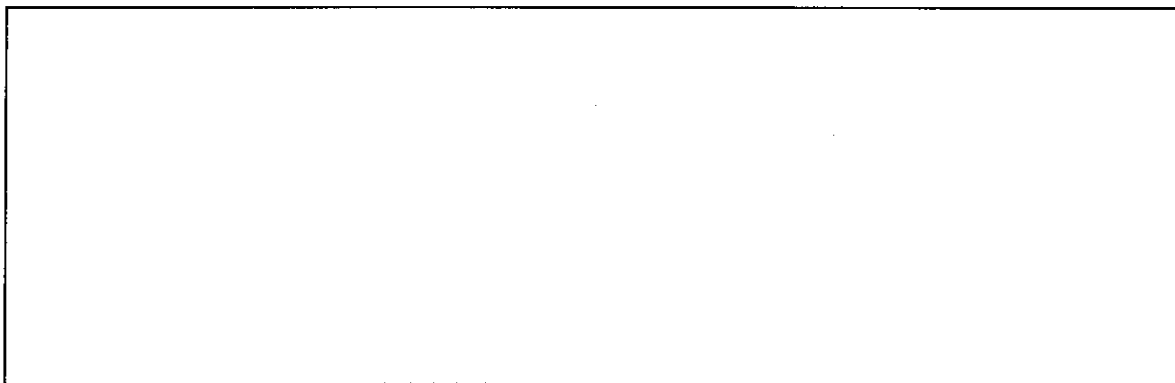
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4/13/02- 2107- (S/NF) FAA reports that, of four U.S. airlines serving Venezuela, only Continental is currently flying. (TFVE03 Log)

4/13/02- 2116- (S/NF) Chávez Vice President Diosdado Cabello assumes presidency pending return of Chávez. (TFVE03 Log)

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4/13/02- 2208- (S/NF) The embassy reports that Maiquetia Int'l Airport is closed. (TFVE03 Log)

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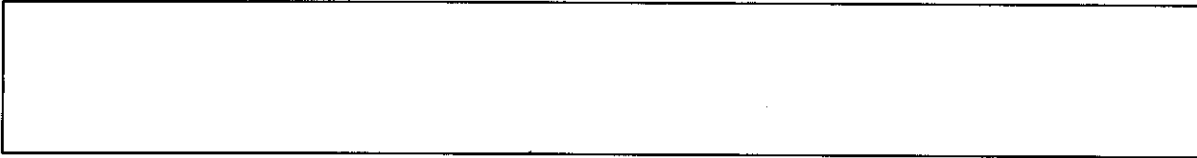
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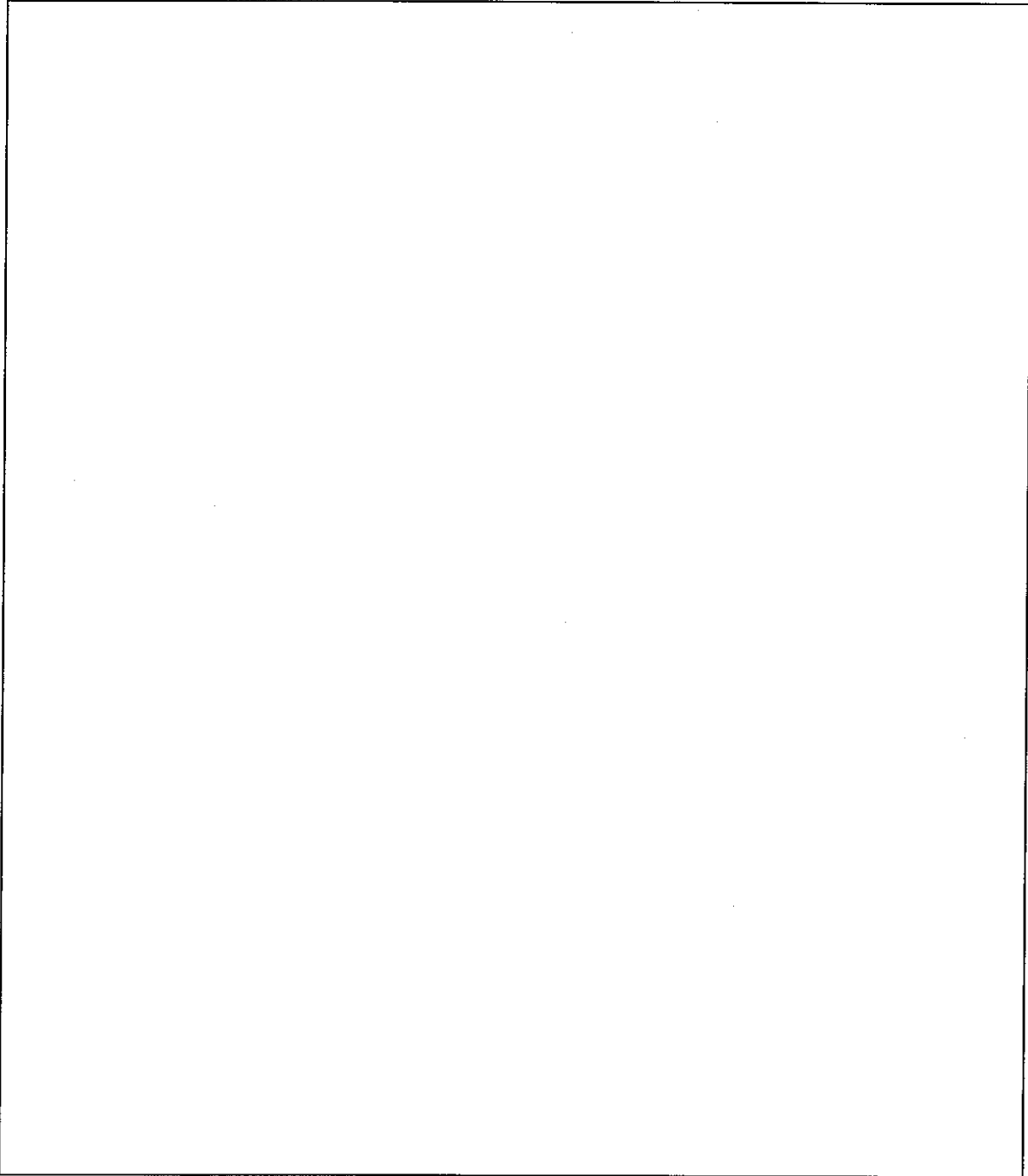
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4/13/02- 2230- (S) Task Force issues SitRep #1. (See attachments) (TFVE03 e-mail)



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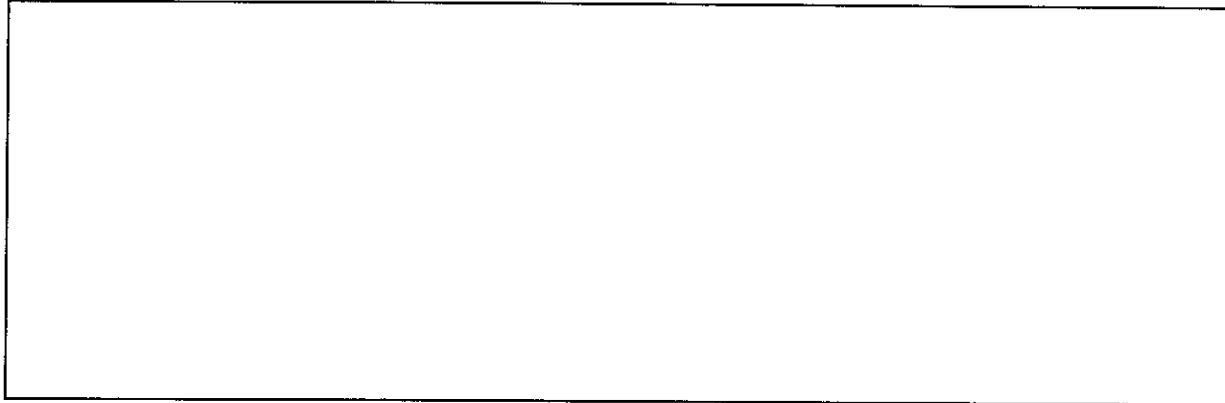
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4/14/02- 0045- (U) U.S. joins the consensus of the OAS Permanent Council to adopt the resolution "Situation in Venezuela."  
(USOAS)

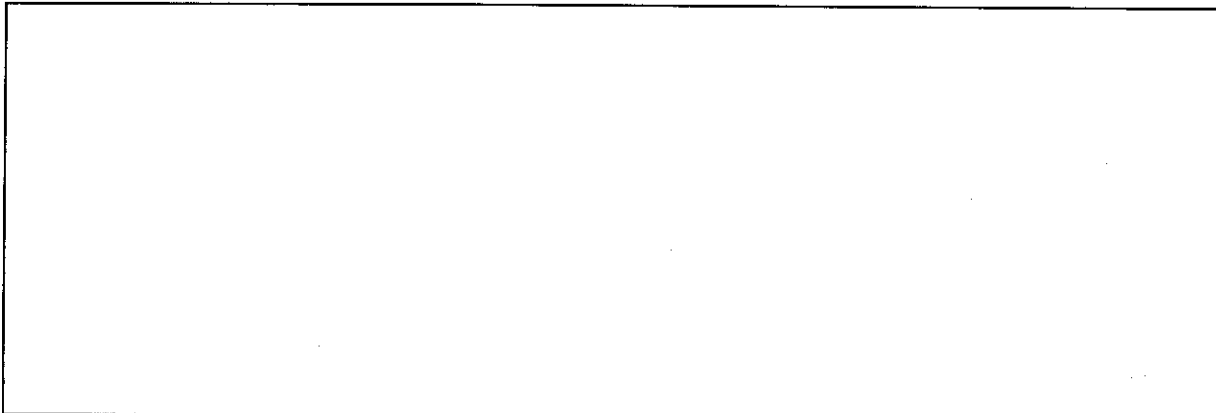
4/14/02- 0125- (S/NF) EAC decides embassy personnel should stay home until further notice. EAC also decides to request voluntary departure authorization in morning. (TFVE03 Log)



B1

4/14/02- (U) NSC Director Condoleezza Rice on Meet the Press:

I hope that Hugo Chávez takes the message that his people sent him that his own policies are not working for the Venezuelan people, that he's dealt with them in a high-handed fashion. And I hope what he said in his speech this morning, that he understands that this is a time for national reflection that he recognizes it's time for him to reflect on how Venezuela got to where it is. He needs to respect constitutional processes. This is no time for a witch-hunt. This is time for national reconciliation in Venezuela. And we are working with our partners in the OAS and in the region to try and help Venezuela through this very difficult time. But we do hope that Chávez recognizes that the whole world is watching, and that he takes advantage of this opportunity to right his own ship, which has been moving frankly in the wrong direction for quite a long time. (WHA/PDA)



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4/14/02- 1650- (U) White House Press Secretary releases Press Statement (received via fax from NSC at 4:48 p.m.) noting U.S. is monitoring situation with great concern and deeply regretting violence and loss of life. (TFVE03 Log)

4/14/02- (U) Statement by White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer:

The United States is monitoring the situation in Venezuela with great concern. We deeply regret the violence and loss of life, and call on all Venezuelans to work peacefully to resolve this crisis.

We welcome and support the decision by the Organization of American States to send immediately a fact-finding mission headed by Secretary General Cesar Gaviria to Venezuela to support the re-establishment of full democracy, with guarantees for citizens and respect for fundamental freedoms, within the framework of the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

The people of Venezuela have sent a clear message to President Chávez that they want both democracy and reform. The Chávez administration has an opportunity to respond to this message by correcting its course and governing in a fully democratic manner.

President Chávez has now called for national reflection and dialogue. He needs to seize this opportunity to ensure legitimacy by reaching out to the political opposition, civil society, and to all democratic forces in Venezuela.

The United States and the world community of democracies will be closely following events in Venezuela. President Chávez bears particular responsibility to preserve the peace, to protect human rights and democratic freedoms, and to create the conditions necessary for a national dialogue. We call on him to work with all Venezuelans and with the Organization of American States toward this end. (WHA/PDA)

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4/14/02- 1928-1940- (S/NF) DCM reports looting in various parts of Caracas. CNN reports numerous casualties in morgue.

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4/14/02- 2230- (S) Task Force issues Sit Rep 003. (See attachments). (TFVE03 e-mail)

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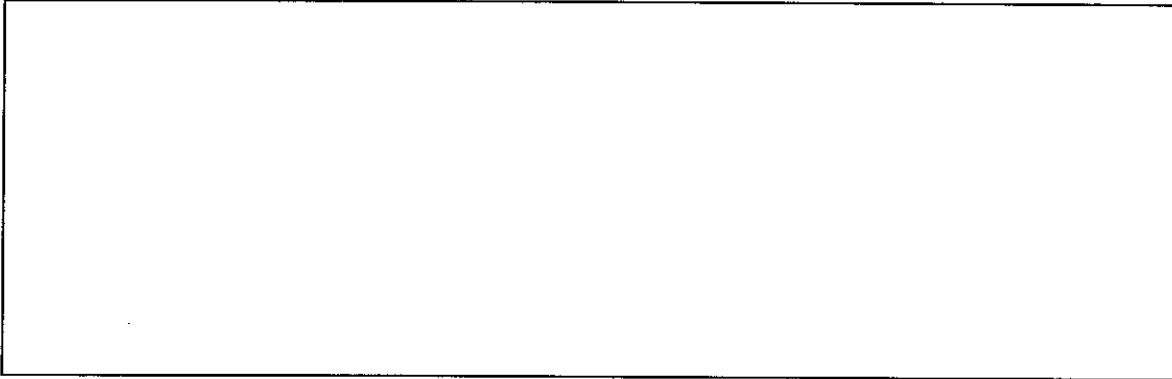
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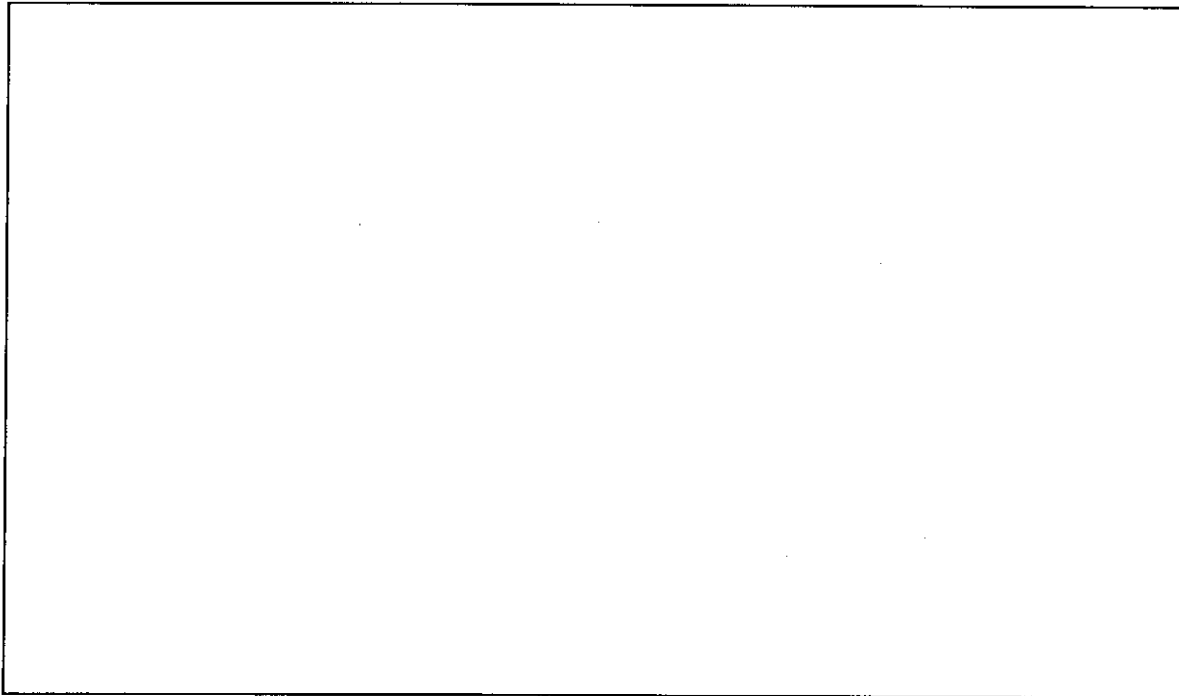
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4/15/02- 0241- (S/NF) AP reports that Carmona's designated cabinet members and more than 100 military personnel are under arrest. (TFVE03 Log)



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 Reports also say that all of the "transition government" ministers have been arrested. VP Cabello has told the press that charges will be brought against these people, most likely "military rebellion," the same charges Chávez was held under in his 1992 coup attempt. (AmEmbassy Caracas e-mail to TFVE03)

4/15/02- 0539- (S/NF) AmEmbassy Caracas reports that local TV stations are running re-runs of Chávez's return to Caracas and

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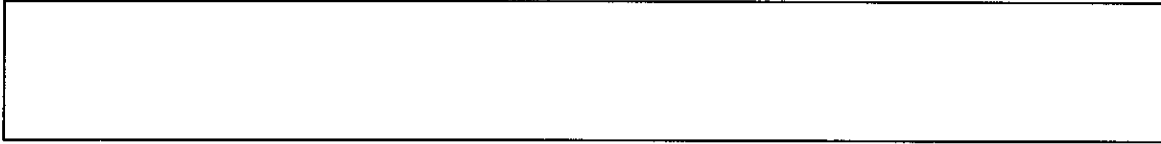
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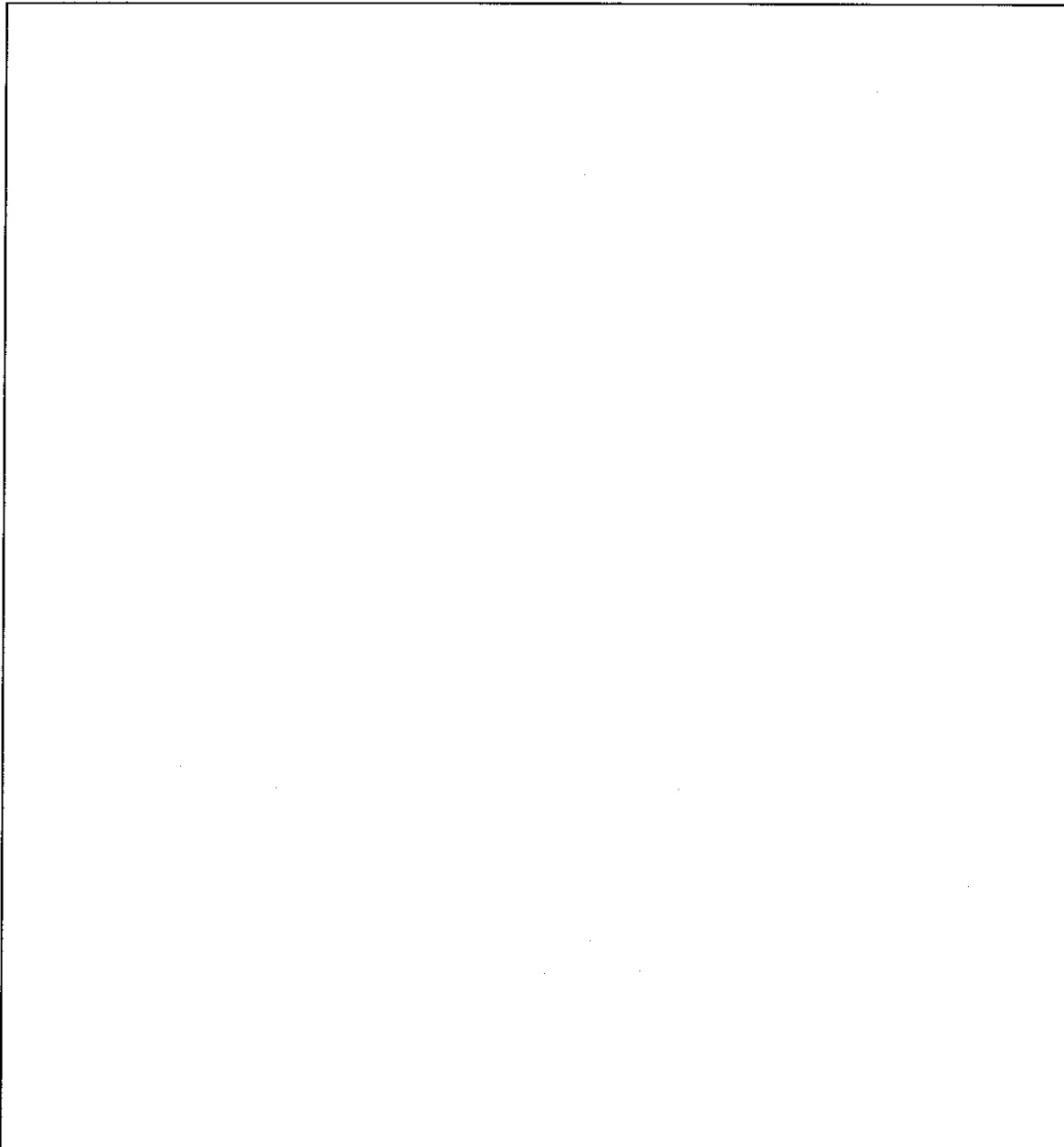
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other regularly scheduled programming. There have been no live broadcasts since 1400 4/14 showing Chávez arriving in Maracay. (AmEmbassy Caracas e-mail to TFVE03)



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4/15/02- 0800- (SBU) Task Force issues SitRep #4. (see attachments) (TFVE03 e-mail)



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4/15/02- 1320- (U) DOS Deputy Spokesman Reeker during daily press briefing:

**QUESTION:** A lot has happened in Venezuela since you issued your statement on Friday, and I am wondering whether you would like to reflect on those events.

**MR. REEKER:** Sure. And I would presume, if I may, that you got the statement that we issued from the White House yesterday, that is, April the 14th, that would update you there. As that statement notes, we continue to monitor events in Venezuela with great concern. Our Embassy there has been trying to follow as closely as possible the events as they are occurring.

As we did in the statement yesterday, the United States underscores the importance for the Organization of American States fact-finding mission, which is led by the Secretary General of the OAS, Cesar Gaviria, and it's our expectation that the Secretary General's mission, which departed this morning, will examine all the circumstances leading to the recent events in Venezuela, and that the OAS and the Inter-American Democratic Charter will play a vital role in strengthening the essential elements of democracy in Venezuela.

We are encouraged by President Chávez's calls for national reflection, and we urge all Venezuelans to take advantage of this opportunity to promote national reconciliation and a genuine democratic dialogue. We strongly urge Venezuelans to refrain from seeking retribution from political and civil society actors for the events over the past several days; at the same time, we do hope that those responsible for violence would be brought to justice.

Any questions on that? Jesus.

**QUESTION:** I was wondering if you can say something about some rumors that the situation in Venezuela was not orchestrated by Mr. Chávez himself and members of the military forces.

**MR. REEKER:** Well, I think there are lots of rumors and lots of conflicting reports emanating from Venezuela. At this point, we are trying to monitor the situation as best we

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can. I think the important thing there is the mission of the OAS. The Secretary General, as I noted, left today to go to Venezuela, and he will examine all the circumstances leading to the recent events in Venezuela. So it is important to let that mission go forward, see what the OAS, what the Secretary General is able to report, and we want the OAS and the Democratic Charter that countries of the region signed up to play an important role in this process. It is important now for Venezuela, and all Venezuelans, to use the opportunity to get back to full democracy and focus on moving ahead.

Do you have a follow-up?

**QUESTION:** Yes. With the restoration of a democratic and elected president, as Hugo Chávez is in Venezuela, you don't think it is reestablish the full constitutional powers of Venezuela?

**MR. REEKER:** Well, I think at this point we need to see exactly where things stand. There are a lot of conflicting reports, as you yourself just noted. We approved yesterday -- joined with our hemispheric partners approving a resolution at the OAS that condemned the alteration of constitutional order. And since the removal of President Chávez on April 11th that we talked about last week, and through his subsequent return to the presidency, we have continued to work actively through the OAS and under the framework of that Inter-American Democratic Charter to develop a hemispheric response to the recent events there. So I think we're working very closely with the OAS to, first of all, try to establish what the facts are, to see where things stand, to encourage reconciliation and a return to full democracy there. And that mission of the Secretary General is going to be very important to that. I think our support for the resolution yesterday expressed United States solidarity with the people of Venezuela and their efforts to reestablish full democracy, with guarantees for citizens and respect for fundamental human rights. So, again, we will be guided by the Inter-American Democratic Charter, working with our hemispheric partners, to see that Venezuela can get back on the right track. Jonathan.

**QUESTION:** Phil, you supported this resolution yesterday, but why did you not condemn the coup attempt on Friday?

**MR. REEKER:** I think if you look at what we said on Friday, we were reflecting on the need for restraint and respect for peaceful expression of political opinion; we were saddened by the loss of life that took place on Friday; and we were trying to examine the facts as we saw them at the

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time. We expressed then, as we do now, our solidarity with the Venezuelan people and our looking forward to ensuring the full exercise of democratic rights and the importance of working in accord with the principles of the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

So I think, again, it's a matter --

**QUESTION:** So the (inaudible) --

**MR. REEKER:** If you let me finish, I think I might get to that. I think it's a matter of knowing what the facts are, seeing how things develop, and exactly what is going on there. And it is going to be important to establish those facts to see what the Secretary General of the OAS is able to report to us.

**QUESTION:** Can I have a follow-up?

**MR. REEKER:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** Can you tell us in detail about the contacts between the United States and the coup plotters in the period leading up to the coup attempt?

**MR. REEKER:** I don't think I have ever defined anything as a coup or coup plotters, Jonathan, and I don't know to whom you would be referring in terms of contacts.

**QUESTION:** The people who --

**MR. REEKER:** The United States has tried to monitor these developments last week and over the weekend, and continues to do that in accord with our hemispheric partners, trying to establish what the facts are. And I don't think I have any particular contacts to report to you.

**QUESTION:** Well, can you say whether there were any such contacts between the United States and the people who removed President Chávez from power?

**MR. REEKER:** Again, I think if you look at what the facts were on Friday, we had seen President Chávez having resigned, as reported in many of the media, including your own. We tried to keep contacts with all parties in Venezuela and encourage through those contacts peaceful resolution of this, respect for democratic rights, and utilization of the Inter-American process, the Charter for Democracy, to pursue a return to full democracy in Venezuela. And we will continue to have contacts with a broad spectrum of Venezuelans as we encourage that, encourage reconciliation, encourage an end to any violence, and work with our hemispheric partners to see that Venezuela can get back on the right path.

**QUESTION:** You're saying that President Chávez resigned. Is it still your position that he did, at one state, resign?

**MR. REEKER:** Those were the reports on Friday. That is what we saw. That is what was reported. We have seen conflicting

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reports. We have seen more conflicting reports today. As I have said to your colleague's questions, we are going to have to wait till we establish all the facts and hopefully that is what Secretary General Gaviria will be able to do with his mission that we fully support to Venezuela under the rubric of the OAS.

Yes, George.

**QUESTION:** Can I ask another Venezuela question? Yesterday, the US condemned, along with other Latin countries, what happened in the wee hours on Friday, but there is no -- nothing remotely resembling a condemnation on Friday. How do you explain that?

**MR. REEKER:** I think what I just said to Jonathan was on Friday we put out a statement of our hopes and reflecting on what appeared to be the facts at the time. And as our statement said at the time, the facts as we knew them, the best information available at that time -- and I think that was the best information available to you, as well as to us -- was that there had been this change in government, and we expressed our view of what we wanted to see happen there; that is, a return to democracy and a respect for all of the elements contained in the Democratic Charter, and our dedication to working with the OAS and our hemispheric partners to help see Venezuela through that.

So, again, it is a matter of looking at the facts as we have them and trying to state what we would like to see happen in accordance with those facts. And I think that is what I have repeated right now. I think you can't get ahead of yourself here, George.

**QUESTION:** The OAS resolution refers to an interruption of the constitutional (inaudible) thread. Is your interpretation that that refers to events before the coup or during the events?

**MR. REEKER:** I think it refers to all of it. The process that has gone on over many several days. And as you will know, we had expressed for some time concern about events in Venezuela, about the need to respect democracy, to respect freedom of the press, to respect civil society, to have a dialogue to resolve political differences. Those are things we had been discussing over a period of many months. So our concerns were well known, and we continue now to urge Venezuelans to take advantage of the opportunity they now have to promote national reconciliation. And the resolution from the OAS was simply looking at that, condemning this alteration of constitutional order that clearly has taken place, even though we are unable to specify exactly where things stand or what the facts are.

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That is what the OAS mission will attempt to do in coming days.

**QUESTION:** Our understanding is that there was a much stronger draft introduced by the US at the OAS, and in light of -- that was not accepted by just about everybody else. In light of that, are you not putting an awful lot of hope on this OAS decision, this mission?

**MR. REEKER:** We think the OAS represents the proper forum in which to deal with this. It is why such organizations have been developed. It is exactly the structure where we look to work with our partners in the hemisphere to resolve these issues. And the President reflected on that when he was in Lima, where we looked at the democratic charter, which is what we are using now as the template for dealing with these issues. And it is a good opportunity for Venezuelans to work together, an opportunity for the people of Venezuela to strengthen their democracy, which will put them on a better path for economic and political stability. And we are committed under that Democratic Charter to work with the others in the hemisphere to help the Venezuelans do just that. So I think the mission is very important. It will help to establish some of the facts. There are conflicting reports even now out of Venezuela. We want to see a return to democracy. We want to see a refrain from retribution. And as I said, we would like to see those responsible for violence and for crime brought to justice.

**QUESTION:** When you're using the term "return to democracy" are you saying Venezuela is not now a democracy? And what does it need to do to become one?

**MR. REEKER:** No, I think as we said in our statement Friday, and as we have talked about for some months, there were concerns about elements of the Venezuelan democracy that were suffering -- threats against independent media, threats against independent political parties -- and the need to pursue a solution to political differences through dialogue was something we had stressed all along. So my reference has always been a return to full democracy in Venezuela. That is what the Democratic Charter is all about, and that is why the hemispheric partners are working together on that.

**QUESTION:** And is there a concern that talking this way before this in any lent encouragement, either intentionally or unintentionally, to this happening?

**MR. REEKER:** I don't think that is a concern at all. I think we have simply reflected, often per your questions, on developments in Venezuela, and where we have had concerns and others in the hemisphere or around the world have had

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concerns, and those in Venezuela have had concerns about this, too. That is obvious from the actions going on there. What we want to stress is this needs to be dealt with through dialogue, keeping in mind the important elements of a full democracy. And that is what the OAS mission is going to be about: helping Venezuela through this problem.  
Sir.

**QUESTION:** Can you give us the US reaction to the accusation coming from the Cuban Government that the US was somehow involved behind this thing in Venezuela, and also reports that there were some elements of the Cuban Government involved in bringing Chávez back?

**MR. REEKER:** That is a typical Cuban response to this type of thing. We, instead, choose to work with the rest of those responsible neighbors in the hemisphere, those that are part of the Democratic Charter. Obviously Cuba is not part of that. And that is why we are going to work with those that are dedicated to democracy, and would suggest that Cuba follow the same path.

**QUESTION:** Phil, with this current democratic political and social situation in Venezuela, is there any concern by the US Government about the future of the energy relationship with Venezuela?

**MR. REEKER:** I don't think that is a concern that I would be able to address here. You might talk to the Energy Department about that. I think we want to see Venezuela pursue a full democracy because that is their best path toward being able to pursue a solid economy, which is in the best interests of all of the Venezuelan people, as well as everyone in the hemisphere. So that is something that we will continue to work on closely with Venezuela and our relationship there, and we will let the Secretary General carry out his mission and see what he is able to report back.

Nick.

**QUESTION:** You talked about a return to democracy on Friday as well. Now that President Chávez is back in power, is that part of the return to democracy?

**MR. REEKER:** Well, again, we need to have the Secretary General of the OAS complete his mission; that is, to go to Venezuela and carry out this fact-finding process. That is what the resolution at the Organization of American States charged him with doing. He departed this morning, and he is going to examine all of the circumstances leading to the recent events in Venezuela -- the variety of reports about President Chávez, reports of his resignation, reports of his return -- to examine where all that stands. As you know

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very well, even now there are conflicting reports coming out of Venezuela about where things stand in the process there.

We think that the OAS is the best vehicle to use to, first of all, establish what the facts are, but to play a vital role in strengthening the essential elements of democracy in Venezuela. And we were encouraged by the calls that President Chávez made in his speech a couple nights ago for national reflection and taking advantage of this opportunity, as I said, to promote national reconciliation and a genuine economic dialogue. That is what we have called for for some time.

Yes, ma'am.

**QUESTION:** Some people in Venezuela are talking about the necessity to create a special commission to investigate what happened in Venezuela to clarify the events. What is the position of the United States? Is it being --

**MR. REEKER:** I have talked now for some time about the OAS Secretary General, Secretary General Gaviria, who is now on his way to Venezuela to do just that on behalf of the OAS. In terms of Venezuela's own domestic response, that is something that the people of Venezuela will have to determine.

**QUESTION:** But after that?

**MR. REEKER:** I think we have to take things one step at a time. We will look to his report, we will establish the facts, and we will see what we can do as a hemispheric community to help Venezuela to strengthen its democracy and ultimately strengthen opportunities for all Venezuelans. Yes, ma'am.

**QUESTION:** Now that President Chávez is back in power in Venezuela, what does that mean for the US as far as oil shipments and gasoline prices are concerned?

**MR. REEKER:** I think those are questions that I wouldn't have any information on. Markets determine prices of oil and gasoline.

Yes, in the back, and then Jonathan. Sorry about that. Could we do the back, and then Jonathan? I had called on the back, and then Jonathan.

**QUESTION:** Phil, do you think that US credibility in Latin America as a champion of democracy has been undercut by the administration's decision not to condemn the events of last Friday?

**MR. REEKER:** Again, I guess I could repeat for you that we have joined with the Organization of American States in doing just that. We condemned the alteration of constitutional order in Venezuela in a vote that was held

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yesterday. We take these actions after we have been able to examine the facts as we know them, and now we look forward to getting more facts from the mission that the OAS has undertaken that we fully support. I don't think it has undermined anybody's credibility; in fact, it has shown that the OAS is the appropriate forum in which to take these actions. It is why these structures have been created.

And I think we have seen in the past, and hopefully we will see now in the present, that the OAS can play a very important role here, that the neighbors of Venezuela, its partners under the Democratic Charter, have a responsibility, an obligation, to use that structure to help Venezuelans through this crisis. And that is what we are doing.

Jonathan.

**QUESTION:** A couple of questions on this. First of all, since you've condemned the alteration of constitutional order, I don't -- I find it very hard to understand why you can't now welcome the restoration of partial democracy. Are you willing to welcome that?

**MR. REEKER:** I think I will stick with what the OAS resolution says --

**QUESTION:** So you're not prepared to --

**MR. REEKER:** I will do what the resolution says, and we will try to establish what the facts are and where things are. We did welcome the opportunity that we think Venezuelans have now. As I said, we were encouraged by President Chávez's calls for national reflection, and we are strongly urging Venezuelans to take this opportunity to promote national reconciliation in conjunction with the efforts of the hemispheric community.

**QUESTION:** Okay. And my other question is this: I see now you are very enthusiastic about waiting until the OAS reaches a conclusion about the state of affairs there. Why on Friday did you jump to conclusions and not take the same wait-and-see attitude about --

**MR. REEKER:** Well, if you look, Jonathan, our statement on Friday was based on what we said was the best information available at that time. And again, on Friday, as you keep referring to, we said that we expected the situation to be resolved peacefully and democratically by the Venezuelan people in accord with the principles of the Inter-American Democratic Charter. I don't think that is anything different from what we are saying now.

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**QUESTION:** Well, because you didn't say at that stage that you would wait until the OAS had ruled on what had happened.

**MR. REEKER:** The OAS hadn't passed its resolution at that point, and we supported that resolution, which included the mission of the OAS Secretary General. So I think you have to look at these things in sequence based on what was known at the time. If you notice, Dr. Rice spoke to the subject on one of the Sunday shows yesterday. And that goes along with the action that we took at the OAS and what we are going to do now, working again with our hemispheric partners, to see this as regional approach to this. And our expression is one of solidarity with the Venezuelan people, and we want to see their efforts to reestablish full democracy succeed.

**QUESTION:** One more. What is your assessment at this stage of the accuracy of the information you received from your Embassy in Venezuela, and do you think anybody will be in trouble for misleading you or --

**MR. REEKER:** I think our Embassy was providing as accurate information as was possible at the time. Events change, as your wire service knows all too well. And we are in about the same position as many of you when it comes to breaking stories that have things going on on the ground. In fact, you are often in a better position because you have more people who are able to report to you. So, on the basis of our contacts there, we were able to monitor the situation as it changed, literally minute by minute, hour by hour. And that is what we are trying to do is establish all the facts. I think we are going to need this report from the OAS to look into exactly what happened there and determine how we can then move forward on this and think about how to strengthen democracy in Venezuela.

Jesus.

**QUESTION:** Phil, why to use the OAS now when traditionally the United States never follows the steps made by that organizations? You usually act unilaterally in Latin America. Why this time?

**MR. REEKER:** Well, Jesus, I think you are very wrong, and I think you need to look back at recent history. I simply recall having various conversations with you when events in other Latin American countries took a turn for the worse in terms of democracy, and we worked with the OAS in those situations and we continue to work with the OAS. The OAS has passed this Democracy Charter. The President of the United States was in Lima discussing that. We used the Summit of the Americas in Quebec last year to foster this

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process, to express our support for it, and do exactly what the OAS has done now, to express a condemnation for the alteration of constitutional order, to deplore violence in pursuit of political gains, and of course some of that violence led to the loss of human life. And so we support that resolution with the OAS, just as we have supported the democratic charter and its process within the OAS.

**QUESTION:** Do you still believe that what happened last week was Mr. Chávez' mistakes?

**MR. REEKER:** I think as we said at the time, and we had expressed some concern for a long time, concerns about some of the steps that President Chávez had taken that we felt, and many others felt, reflected poorly on democracy in Venezuela, and the need to respect basic tenets of democracy, including freedom of the press and the opportunity for opposition political parties to work within the system peacefully. Those were concerns that we had. I think as our statement yesterday said, the people of Venezuela have sent a clear message to President Chávez that they want democracy and reform, and that now the Chávez administration has an opportunity to respond by correcting its course, correcting some of the things that we had highlighted, along with others that were of concern, and can now govern in a fully democratic manner. And the OAS and the hemispheric partners stand ready to participate and support the Venezuelan people in that process.

Yes, sir.

**QUESTION:** Is it not true, however, that your resolution -- or your draft resolution was not accepted by the council at the OAS? And is it not true that the final statement referring to an interruption of the constitutional order is very vague; it doesn't make clear who interrupted and when it was interrupted?

**MR. REEKER:** I think --

**QUESTION:** Just let me finish, please. If it is -- it is certainly not clear as to the application of the Democratic Charter how this would be applied. That calls for sanctions, if I understand it correctly.

**MR. REEKER:** Well, for the -- I don't know -- 15th time, let me refer you to exactly what the resolution called for, and that included sending Secretary General Gárriga to Venezuela to have a fact-finding mission. That needs to take place so that we can establish the facts and how to apply the democratic charter to those facts. In terms of what is clear and not clear, the final resolution and statement from the OAS that was passed yesterday, with our full support, is what counts. I don't

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know what went into drafting. Anybody that follows diplomatic processes like that knows that there are usually many drafts of these things, with lots of ideas batted around, until you can find an appropriate set of language which used in a resolution, such as we got yesterday. We fully support that resolution, we fully support the Secretary General's mission to Venezuela, and we fully support the Venezuelan people as they now move forward for national reconciliation and a restoration of full democracy in their country. (WHA/PDA)

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4/15/02- 2230- (SBU) Task Force issues Sit Rep #5. (See attachments) (TFVE03 e-mail)

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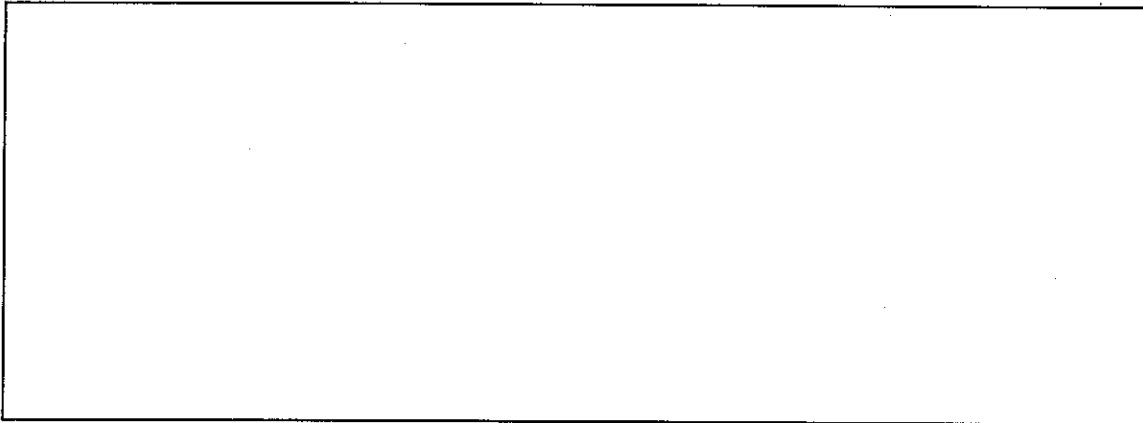
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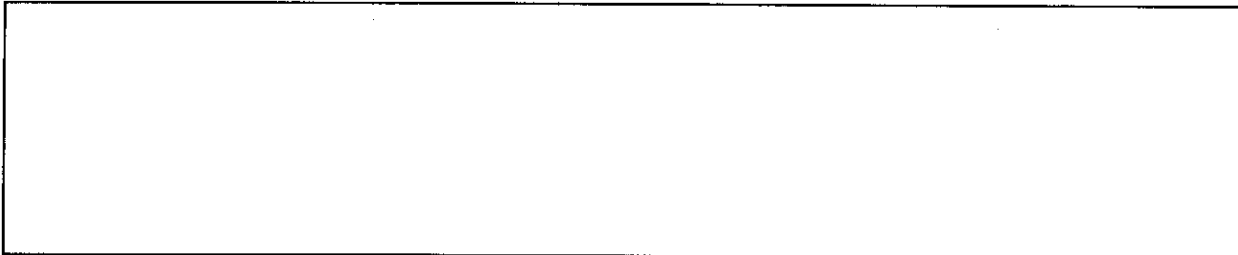
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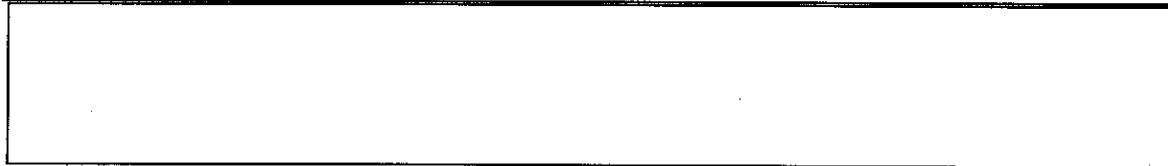


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4/16/020- 1230- (U) Amb. Shapiro and IO are guests at lunch hosted by owners of Bloque de Armas publishing house. Amb. Shapiro emphasizes the importance of participating in the dialogue process called by the GOV. (AmEmbassy Caracas)

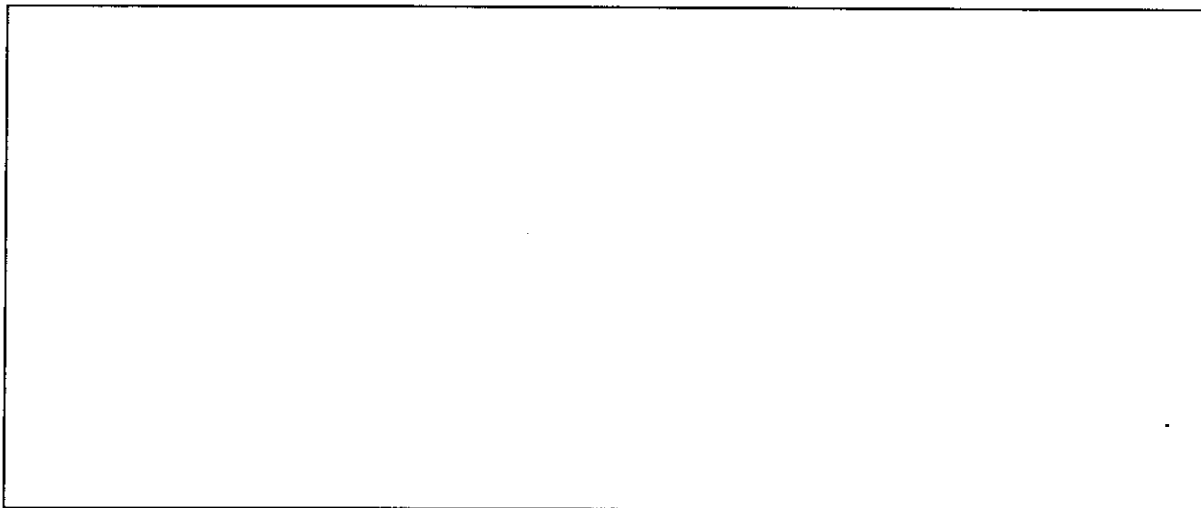


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4/17/02- 1200- At lunch with VENAMCHAM board of Directors, Amb. Shapiro calls for the organization and its members to participate in the dialogue process. (AmEmbassy Caracas)



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[REDACTED]

4/18/02- (U) President George W. Bush during a joint Press Conference with Colombia President Andrés Pastrana in the Oval Office.

My Administration was very clear when there were troubles on the streets in Venezuela, that we support democracy and did not support any extra constitutional action...It is very important for President Chávez to do what he said he was going to do, to address the reasons why there was so much turmoil on the streets. And it is very important for him to embrace those institutions that are fundamental to democracy, including freedom of press and freedom for the ability of the opposition to speak out. (WHA/PDA)

[REDACTED]

4/18/02- 1430- (U) The OAS PermReps receive a briefing by OAS SYG Gaviria on his trip to Venezuela. (O'Reilly e-mail)

4/18/02- 1700- (U) Special General Assembly of the OAS meets. (USOAS)

4/18/02- 1800- (U) Excerpt of remarks of The Secretary of State Colin L. Powell to the Special Session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States.

We condemn the blows to constitutional order that Venezuela has suffered. We look to the legal authorities of Venezuela to hold accountable all who violated the law both before and during the recent crisis. And we call upon the President of Venezuela to follow with deeds his new pledges of national reconciliation and respect for democratic principles. The crisis in Venezuelan democracy that brings

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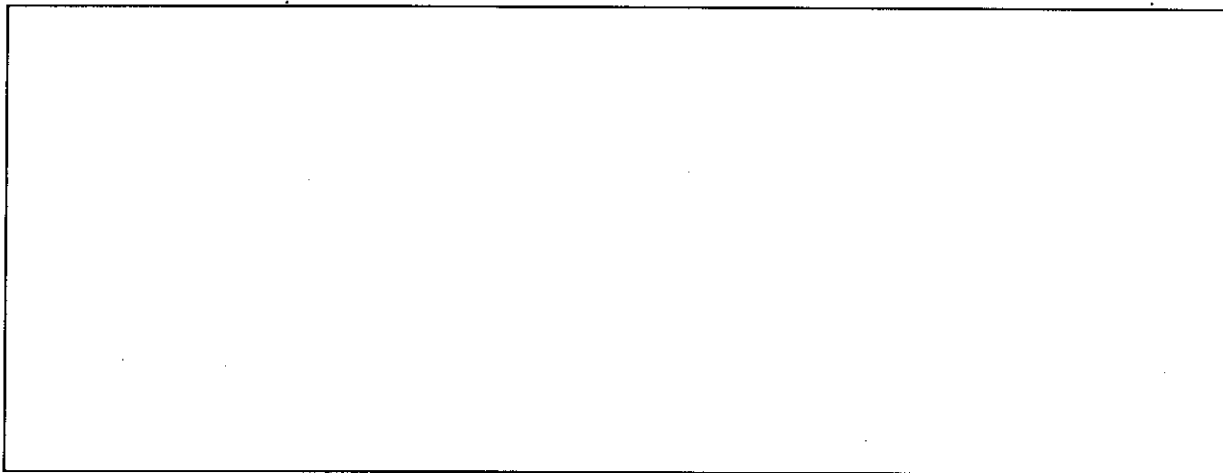
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us to this Special Session did not begin last week. It built and deepened over many months. Venezuelan democracy has been crippled for too long by polarizing rhetoric and action. For many months, we, and others, have expressed our deep concern about this. The events of April 11 are a call to all present to reaffirm our collective commitment to democracy and constitutional order. There is no justification for any government to prevent its citizens from exercising their fundamental rights.

That said, it is incumbent upon all elements of society to seek resolution of grievances through democratic means. This is the era in our hemisphere of democracies, not dictatorships, of constitutions, not coup d'etats. Coups are a thing of the past, not a pathway to the future. In a democracy, no one can be above, or outside of, the rule of law. Democracies do not remain democracies for long if elected leaders use undemocratic methods. And defending democracy by resorting to undemocratic means destroys democracy. If the people of Venezuela are to succeed in building better lives for themselves and better futures for their children, their political leaders now must come together to resolve problems constructively and constitutionally. (WHA/PDA)

4/18/02- 2330- (U) OAS AG/RES. 1 (XXIX-E/02) "Support for Democracy in Venezuela" General Assembly resolution introduced. (USOAS)

4/19/02- 0115- (U) OAS AG/RES. 1 (XXIX-E/02) "Support for Democracy in Venezuela" General Assembly resolution adopted. (USOAS)



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4/19/02- 1600- (U) A/S Reich meets with Venezuelan FM Dávila to review OAS resolution and events in Venezuela. (WHA/AND)

Attachments:

Tab 1 - Venezuela Task Force SitReps 1-6

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